

JULY 1917

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MAGAZINE

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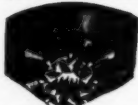


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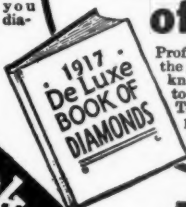
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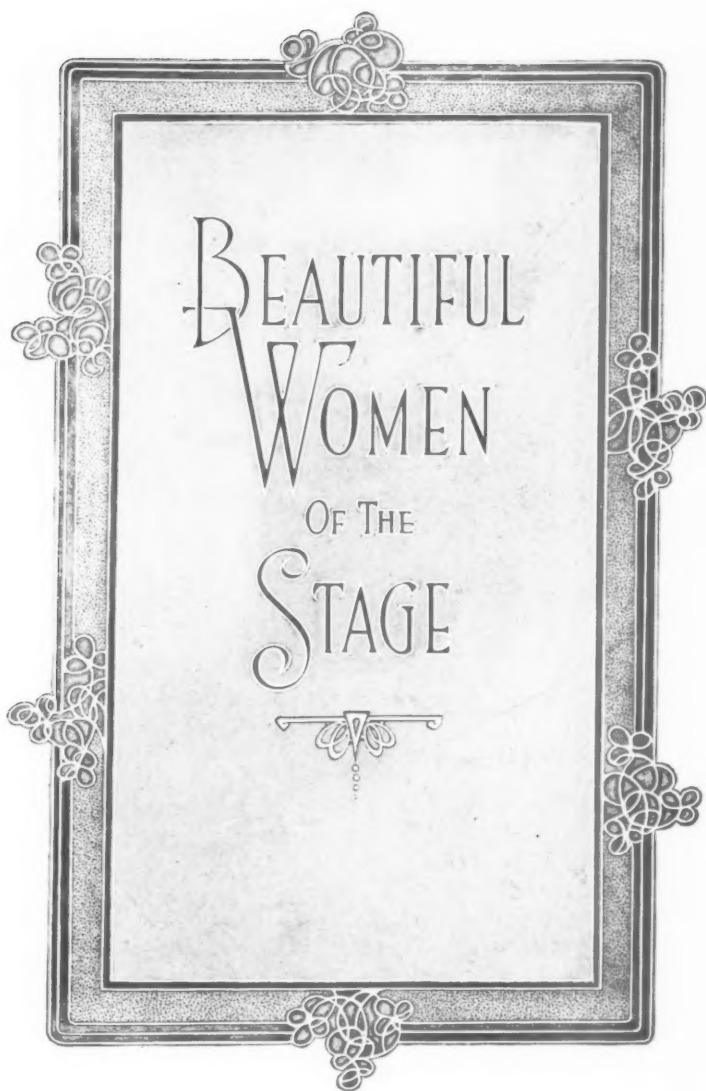
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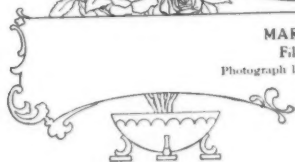




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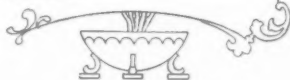
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July
1917

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIX
No. 3

RAY LONG, Editor



The
Silk Thread
by

Will Payne

□ □
ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

FIVE buildings in different parts of the city were wrecked by explosions of dynamite. Each of them housed a gambling-room. Then about three o'clock one morning Abe Condon, boss gambler, issuing from his bedroom in pajamas, revolver in hand, was shot through the heart. The police and the newspapers explained that these urbane events were incidents in a war to the death between two rival factions of gamblers.

A little after eleven o'clock of the morning on which Condon was killed, "Diamond Dick" Tyrrel—sometime proprietor of a gaming-establishment of the more genteel sort—sold fifty thousand dollars' worth of city bonds to the Huddicutt Trust Company.

Four days later a woman, claiming to be Condon's widow, produced a list of securities which she said were in Condon's house when he was murdered. The list included fifty thousand dollars' worth of city bonds, the numbers on which were the same as those on the bonds which Tyrrel had sold. Tyrrel was arrested and indicted; whereupon he sent certain persons word to this effect: "Pull me out, or I'll drag you in."

It was Edwin W. Huddicutt, youngest vice-president of the trust company, to whom Tyrrel had sold the bonds. Gossip amused itself, orally and in print, by explaining how "Diamond Dick," sometime proprietor of a genteel gaming-establishment, came to be personally acquainted with this young man. Meanwhile Huddicutt's identi-



The dinner was finished, the coffee drunk and the cigars smoked; the talk was running out. At a quarter past nine the informal little company arose from the table. Then a waiter went over to the Jackson Boulevard side of the room, pushed up a window-shade and stood for a moment looking down into the street with a napkin carelessly draped against his right breast.

fication of Tyrrel as the person who had sold him the bonds was the main point in the evidence against him.

The trial was set for Thursday, the seventeenth, at ten o'clock. Wednesday, the sixteenth, Edwin W. Huddicutt dined as usual at the Meridian Club, two college-mates being his table companions. It was a modest little dinner with only mineral water beside Huddicutt's plate. For something over two years now, nothing more potent had stood beside his plate.

THE dinner was finished, the coffee drunk and the cigars smoked; the talk was running out. At a quarter past nine the informal little company arose from the table. Then a waiter went over to the Jackson Boulevard side of the room, pushed up a window-shade and stood for a moment looking down into the street with a napkin carelessly draped against his right breast.

A few minutes after that, as Huddicutt strolled leisurely toward the elevator, a page intercepted him, holding out a little tray on which lay a plain white envelope with *Mr. Huddicutt* written on it in pencil in a woman's hand. The envelope contained a note, hastily penciled in the same woman's hand. It ran:

I have a message from him. Very important. Will wait for you in doorway of Bauer's Café, around on Wabash.

There was no signature; but the envelope contained something else—a rather ponderous gold pencil, with a clasp by which one might attach it to one's vest. It bore an engraved monogram, but even without that, Huddicutt would have recognized it immediately.

He had presented it to Augustus—otherwise "Mullens"—Johnstone upon the latter's sixteenth birthday. Since then Mullens Johnstone had lost many things, including his inheritance, his health, his reputation, his self-respect and—latterly—his right to appear on the street without fear of being taken into custody. But it seemed he had kept the pencil. Huddicutt remembered how Mullens, in good fortune and bad, usually carried it in his vest pocket.

Huddicutt went down in the elevator, got his hat and stick and walked briskly around to the Café Bauer, which occupied a basement on Wabash Avenue. He remembered the young woman as soon as he saw her, for perhaps twice or thrice he had seen her in Mullens' company. She was tall and dark, with big, defiant eyes. The moment he stepped in she hurried up to him and spoke low and rapidly, with an impatient line down her forehead:

"He's come back. I think he's going to die. He wants to see you at once. It's only ten minutes in a taxi."

There was no other thought in Huddicutt's mind than to get as quickly as possible to the man with whom he'd played hookey and pilfered from fruit-stands—with whom, later on, he had joined hands in opposing academic authority—and whom still later he had tried in sorrow and despair to keep from ruining himself as speedily and comprehensively as possible. Even now Huddicutt was trying to untangle that scandalous financial mess which had caused poor, tragic, broken Mullens to go into hiding with an indictment over his head. Huddicutt's heart was sore and heavy. This desperate coming back—evidently at once seeking the company of the dark young woman with big, defiant eyes—argued ill for any real reformation.

"We can get a taxi at the corner," he said.

A MINUTE later he was rolling west on Jackson Boulevard beside the tall, dark young woman—of whom he was scarcely more aware than of the machine in which they sat or of the chauffeur out in front. Questioning her didn't even occur to him. He vaguely and rather unjustly resented her as an incident in Mullens' ruin; otherwise he took her almost as impersonally as the sheet of note-paper in his pocket. He had paid no attention when she gave the chauffeur an address, and during the ride he scarcely knew in what direction they went. His mind was absorbed with the tragedy of Augustus Johnstone.

The cab rolled up to the curb and stopped. Light from a street-lamp shone

into it. In this glow he mechanically saw the girl bend forward and put out an eager hand to open the cab door and alight. In doing this she glanced around at him—a dark face, with big, defiant eyes.

It may have been the merest coincidence, or there may have been some inner prompting so subtle that his brain did not register it. At any rate, he looked down at his right hand, around the middle finger of which a blue-silk thread was tied—a remembrancer. Immediately a brand-new thought drove through his brain like a thunderbolt.

But the girl was already getting out of the cab. He followed her. They were in front of a three-story brick building with an arched entrance, which evidently contained three flats—one of those structures that are common as peas over great areas of the city, where people in modest circumstances live. It was a dingy sort of street, but the sort one can find a thousand miles of, more or less. It might be shabby and respectable, or it might be shabby and disreputable. There was no certainty except that it was rather dingy.

Three people—a man and two women—were standing by the stone steps that led up to the arched entrance. So much Huddicutt's glance swept in. He paid the cabman and gave him a dollar tip; then he turned to follow the girl into the building—noting that the three people lingering by the steps eyed him curiously. At the foot of the steps he halted abruptly, exclaiming to his guide: "Oh, excuse me a minute. I've left my stick in the cab."

He ran to the curb, shouted, "Hey, taxi!" and sprinted down the street two rods, overhauling the vehicle and climbing in to get his stick. He paused to apologize and give the chauffeur another tip; then, smiling, stick in hand, he rejoined the girl and followed her upstairs.

SHE applied a latchkey to the door of the upper flat, entered and turned on the light. His glance took in the back parlor of that type of flat. Evidently there was a slightly larger parlor in front, separated from this room by

the tawdrily gaudy cotton portière. That would be the dining-room behind the arch and portière on the other side; behind that would be the kitchen, bath and a couple of bedrooms. This back parlor was furnished with a pathetic, time-eaten, woebegone cotton-plush magnificence. The young woman motioned to a faded blue-plush chair, saying:

"Sit down. I'll see how Mullens is." At once she added bluntly, holding out her hand: "Give me the pencil."

There seemed a difference in her attitude toward him; it seemed rather to grin brazenly at him. But he handed her the pencil from his coat pocket and sat down; whereupon she swiftly disappeared into the dining-room, and he again glanced about him, smiling slightly.

He was hardly up to the medium height, and was slim and fair. His fine hair, brushed back from a sloping forehead, was the color of straw and as shiny. His blue eyes shone, and in smiling he showed even white teeth. He was effulgent. Even in repose he shed a pleasant glow, as though his eager interest in life gave itself out incessantly. Simply to look at him made one feel he would have many friends. His nervous system was keyed up—as shown by restless little motions of his slim hands, the play of his thin face, his shining eyes. He might be anything but dull.

The person who stepped through the tawdry portières out of the dark front room and looked down at him was quite the opposite of all this, being more than six feet high and of an oxlike immensity. It seemed he could never be anything but dull. His low forehead, one thought, would wrinkle only in response to primitive emotions. His pale eyes looked blank as pieces of chinaware, and were slightly filmy. His broad face was marked with innumerable tiny red lines like the silk fibers in bank-notes. Any experienced observer would have taken him for a hard drinker, and he exhaled now a strong alcoholic odor. The face was barred by a thick, curly, blue-black mustache.

From descriptions which he had heard, Huddicutt judged this must be "Bull"

Wilks, chief of a band of desperate criminals who had themselves duly incorporated as Wilks' Private Detective Agency.

AFTER looking blankly down at Huddicutt a moment the large man lowered himself into the chair next the door and spoke calmly in a deep, hoarse voice:

"Well, I suppose you begin to see what you're up against."

"I don't, quite," Huddicutt replied soberly. "Explain it."

The man twisted his big, curly mustache, as though explaining were a supererogatory bore; then he put his mighty hands on his massive knees and explained hoarsely while his china eyes stared bovinely at the captive:

"A witness saw you leave the Café Bauer with Maggie. Those three people down by the steps—maybe you noticed 'em—are respectable enough to stand up under any cross-examination. They'll swear you drove here with her and followed her upstairs. You used to be a busy little sport yourself, you know. Of course, we've got the record—times you and Mullens Johnstone and Hal Pearson and Erby North and others were hitting 'er up a mile a minute. You pass for a good boy now—down to business every morning. I see by the papers you're going to marry Miss Lambert next month—fine old family, the Lamberts." He twisted his mustache again and seemed more bored than ever.

"Maggie's married, all straight enough. We've got that shot-proof. Maybe your respected father wouldn't think much of her husband's occupation. Maybe she don't see him very regular. But it's holy-bonds-of matrimony stuff before a jury and for the newspapers.

"That gentleman downstairs is going to run across Maggie's husband by early candlelight to-morrow morning and tip this off to him—all shot-proof before a jury. Naturally the husband will swear out a John Doe warrant for you—bad, rich young masher breaking up his happy home. He'll get a couple of policemen to serve it. I've got 'em all picked out now. They're good friends of mine. About half-past nine to-

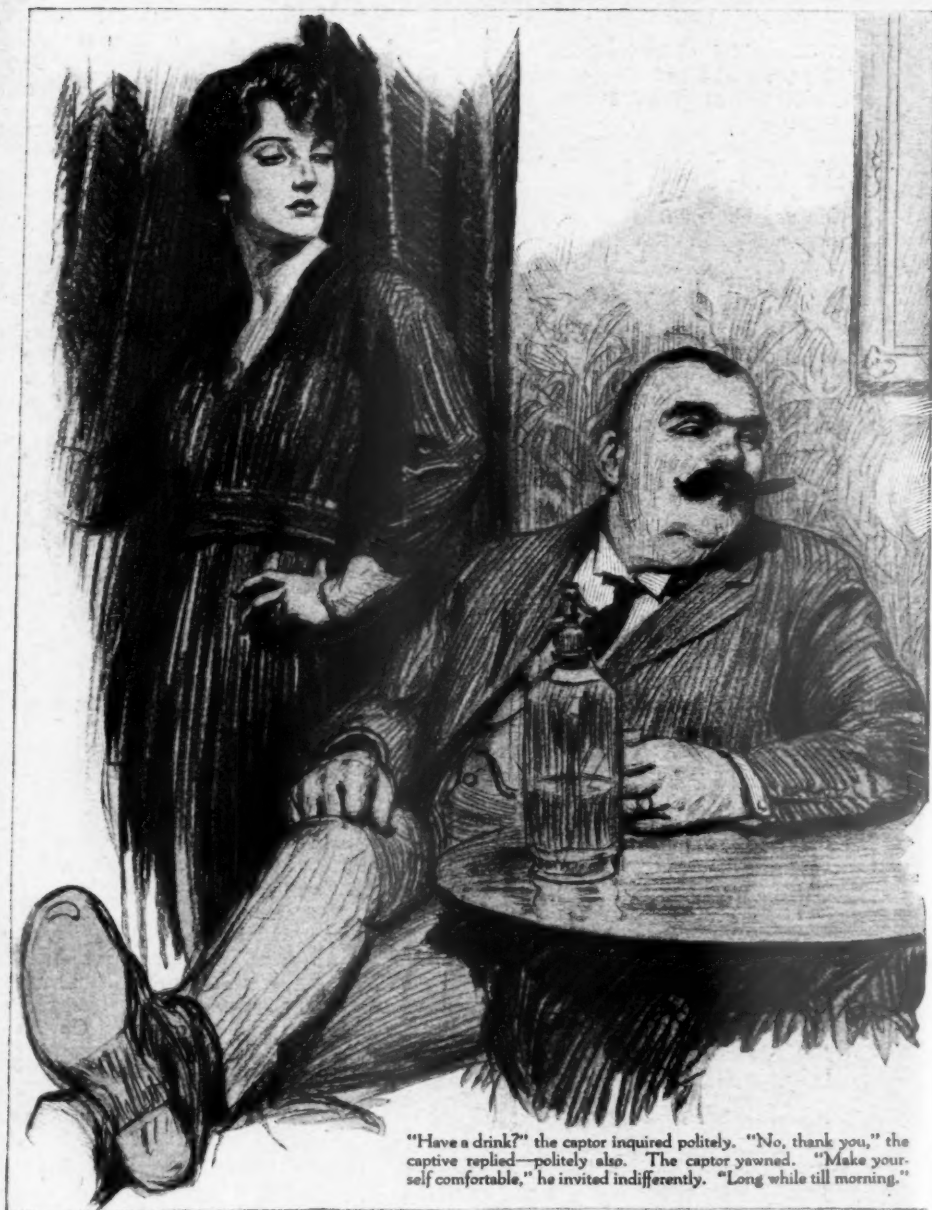
morrow they're going to break in here and nab you. I'll attend to the scenery. I've got some empty whisky- and beer-bottles to scatter around the place—broken glasses, cigarette-stubs, et cetera. You can bank on Maggie to do her part right. She's a bright girl, and she's going to earn more money 'n she's seen in a long while.

"You'll say you're due in criminal court at ten o'clock to give testimony against Dick Tyrrel, and you'll promise to come back and give yourself up as soon as you're through testifying. The husband'll let you go. He's a good-hearted sucker. Then you'll beat it to court and testify."

He paused again to stroke his mustache and resumed, dully:

"I suppose there's a thousand men around this town that look just about like Dick Tyrrel. I suppose you never knew him very well, anyhow. A young man like you, brought up in a fine, rich Christian home, wouldn't naturally know the proprietor of a gambling-house very well. When Dick Tyrrel is pointed out to you in court, you can be awfully surprised. When you come to get a good, square look at him, you can't really swear he's the chap that handed you the bonds. It will seem to you the chap that handed you the bonds was fatter and balder and had more gray hair. You can be so uncertain about it that they can't convict Dick. Of course, that's the main point.

"In that case Maggie's husband and the policemen and everybody else will plumb forget they ever saw you here. You can trot back to your father's bank and go right ahead with your arrangements to marry Miss Lambert. On the other hand, if you should be so positive about Dick that they convict him, you'll be pinched again right away on this John Doe warrant—in plenty of time for the afternoon newspapers to smear it all over the front page. Then Maggie's husband will sue for divorce, with you as co-respondent. After that he'll sue you for alienating his wife's affections. There'll be plenty of newspaper stuff for a year to come. I've got some spicy little material out of your wild-oats field that'll attract attention when



"Have a drink?" the captor inquired politely. "No, thank you," the captive replied—politely also. The captor yawned. "Make yourself comfortable," he invited indifferently. "Long while till morning."

properly dressed up. We'll sure make a celebrity out of you."

He twisted his mustache and rumbled hoarsely: "Think it all over, young

man. You're not a detective, you know. You didn't use any Bertillon system on Dick Tyrrel or take his finger-prints. How can anybody be so cocksure about



a man's identity from only looking at him a few minutes? It wasn't Dick that give you the bonds; it was some other chap. Just keep that in mind."

HUDDICUTT comprehended with deep astonishment. The plot was like its authors—raw, nasty, stupid; yet it had a certain brute cunning, was

at once preposterous and astute, ridiculous and ominous. He knew well enough what the newspapers would make of it if it came to them. He could already hear the incredulous jeer with which quite half his fellow-townsmen would receive his story of an inveigling young woman and a burly jailer. He appreciated the essential weakness of his own position—to-wit: he had sown a considerable crop of wild oats, and a virtuous world is slow to believe in reformation. There arose upon his mind the image of a proud girl; and he wondered whether—believing his story—she would really ever forgive him for besmearing the eve of their nuptials with this squalid, ill-smelling newspaper sensation. He was very sober indeed.

The big man yawned a little and added: "That's what you're up against. Think it over carefully. We'll spend the night here, you know. You can make yourself comfortable over on the sofa, and I'll do the same here."

He moved his chair up to the writing-table, opened his lips and sent forth a huskily booming command: "Oh, Mag!"

The dark young woman with defiant eyes appeared at the dining-room portière and glanced over at Huddicutt with triumph.

"Fetch in the booze," growled the big person.

She came back in a moment with a tray holding whisky, a siphon, a tall glass, cracked ice.

"Have a drink?" the captor inquired politely.

"No, thank you," the captive replied—politely also.

The captor yawned, bit the end from a cigar, hoisted his feet to another chair and filled the glass. "Make yourself comfortable," he invited indifferently. "Long while till morning."

Huddicutt went over and lay down on the lounge, his face to the wall—very sober indeed, as he rehearsed carefully all the circumstances of his situation. Presently he moved his right hand so as to look at the middle finger. The silk thread was gone from it. From that circumstance he drew a deep consolation.

FIVE minutes before nine of the morning of the trial, Peter Huddicutt, president of the trust company which bore his name, was sitting at the desk in his office.

The office was a spacious and handsomely furnished room which occupied the right-hand front corner of the banking floor. From the door of its anteroom one could look down the long and lofty general office of the trust company, behind the marble counters of which two hundred clerks were beginning the day's business; or one could look more immediately upon the space, inclosed by a bronze railing, where stood the desks of the five vice-presidents, the secretary, the treasurer.

Now, however, no one was looking either in or out of that door. It was avoided by experienced habitués of the office like the entrance to the lair of a wounded tiger. Mr. Huddicutt would not be disturbed that morning except in a very exigent case or by some rash outsider.

He was a big, loose-jointed man, round-shouldered as he sat at the desk. His reddish hair was thickly peppered with gray, and the stubborn little hedge of it which stood upright above his forehead was quite white. His nose was crooked and his chin a square-hewn, rocky block. There were fleshy pouches beneath his round gray eyes, which had an oddly dimmed, burned-out look, as though they had been seared by the wrath that had flowed through them. His large mouth showed petulance and irascibility—screwing up at a slight angle across his face, or again, the lips pursing or the lower lip protruding.

He was always suffering from his own crossgrained, touchy nerves. He seemed always uneasily simmering and smoldering, as though the lava inside him were flowing, bubbling, ready to burst forth. Around the office, at least, no one ever saw him quite poised and at rest. Unquiet forces seemed always working unstably within him.

Now he was looking over the morning's mail with signs of a more decided nervous agitation than common. His round gray eyes with the fleshy pouches beneath them flickered and glowered at

the letters which passed through his hands. His loose lips worked; his feet shuffled over the rug; his body moved in spasmodic little jerks. Plainly his nerves were on edge.

ALL those "up in front" knew these storm-signs. By a whispered word, a significant grin and shake of the head, a mere elevation of eyebrows, the danger-signal was passed around. This was one of the times when it was best to keep away from the old man.

Stir him up a bit, and the nervous agitation would increase—with twitching and stiffening of the muscles of his upper lip, a change of complexion until his sallow face became ashen gray, a contraction of the forehead until deep lateral furrows appeared in it—finally, perhaps, rigidity of all facial muscles, the lower jaw slightly protruding, and a film over the eyes so they looked leaden. And then an outburst of rage that shook the walls and indiscriminately blasted everything in its path.

His awful temper was one of the traditions of the Street—which explained it, with a certain condescending tolerance, this way: "He was a gutter-rat, you know; began business at the age of five, selling newspapers down by the stockyards and fighting all the tough kids of the neighborhood, screeching and clawing like a young wildcat. It's the only way that the poor old devil knows."

Peter was well enough aware of the explanation, and it helped to keep his temper raw. Sometimes, when he felt himself going, he remembered it would be accounted for on the ground that he started life as a gamin, which maddened him. He had fought furiously all his life. His method of ascent from the gutter had been mainly by savage frontal attack in mass formation. This long and lofty office through which a river of money daily flowed was a creation not only of his ability, but of the boundless passion whose disorderly outbreaks made him a byword.

Perhaps he had been born with that maladjustment of the nervous system which continually let his temper out of hand. Perhaps he came by it when he

was a little wildcat in a human jungle, fighting his way by tooth and claw. It is certain that for a long time, when the diet of well-conditioned children is a matter of parental solicitude, he ate what and when he could, hungering between times, so that at twenty he had a stomach chronically disposed to dyspepsia—which is not a good thing for anybody's temper.

As to his ability, not even his worst enemies denied that. They pointed out that only ability of a transcendent order could have brought a man from the bottom to the top under the handicap of such a beastly temper.

THE office clock was set in the front wall between the arches of the two tall windows which looked down upon the thronged flagging of La Salle Street. It gave out nine unhurried notes—deep and softly resonant, beautiful sounds which floated benignantly over the room. Peter Huddicutt's face screwed up as from a blow; he looked at the clock with a kind of raging and anguished reproach, as though it had betrayed him. But the hands showed nine. With a finger that trembled slightly he pushed a button on his desk. At once Miss Betts stepped into the office from the anteroom.

Only a few of the oldest employees—whose memories went back to days when the concern was Huddicutt & Company, with an upstairs office over on Washington Street—could remember a time when Miss Betts had not been there. For a quarter-century she had been at Peter Huddicutt's elbow, always with a quiet and emollient efficiency. In an atmosphere which he made tempestuous she was like the clock—forever silently, unfailingly on duty, striking when it was time with a low and mellow note. And he thought of her a good deal as he did of the clock. True, he had much respect for her efficiency, prized especially her quiet serenity that never jarred upon one's suffering nerves. She was the only person "up in front" whom he never insulted. Yet it was all quite impersonal. He prized her very much as he did the clock.

In twenty-five years her ample figure

had accumulated flesh; her brown hair was quite gray. In her simple bluish dress she would probably have been taken on the street for a capable head-nurse rather than for the private secretary of an eminent banker. She looked capable and kind. While she could hardly be said to have a complexion, and her age was duly registered in many little wrinkles, her low forehead showed intelligence; her small, twinkling blue eyes were shrewd, steadfast and amiable. Up in front they were always calling upon her for this thing and that. It was a tradition that if some detail of the house's complex history were in doubt, Miss Betts would know. . . . Answering the ring, she stepped into the office and looked serenely at the president.

HE spoke with a kind of sultry breathlessness, in a voice so charged with nervous agitation that it was not quite steady: "Have you called up all his clubs? Have you telephoned the house again?"

Her low voice was soothing, like the note of the clock: "Yes, Mr. Huddicutt. I've telephoned everywhere I could think of. I can't get any word of him after half-past nine last evening, when he left the Meridian Club, where he dined."

Mr. Huddicutt's face grew darker; his upper lip twitched and stiffened; there was a curse in the way he jerked around to face the desk again; his hand, reaching for a letter, trembled so she could see it. He suffered frightfully. No one thought of giving him credit for what he suffered from his own temper. He knew well enough how gossip implicated his son in this dirty gambler's mess—saying it was odd he'd buy bonds from Diamond Dick Tyrrel. His son had not come home the night before; now he was due upon the witness-stand in only an hour. Here was evident reason for uneasiness; but there was a special and secret reason for Peter Huddicutt's suffering.

PETER HUDDICUTT had married rather late in life—well past thirty. It was an instinct with him—made inveterate by long tooth-and-claw experience—to hide anything like sentiment,

even to flout it with a kind of angry contempt. He would have been deeply ashamed to confess to anybody, even his wife, how he had yearned for a son. That was sentiment—to be concealed like nakedness.

He had waited five years for the son; and when the son, coming at length, began to unfold himself, an ineradicable surprise possessed the father's mind—surprise that a creature so slight, bright, supple and graceful could be the issue of his heavy body and vehement mind. Of course it was due to the mother—a bright, graceful, frail creature who had faded out of his engrossed life so long ago that only the merest shadow of her now really remained. In truth he had not been deeply moved when she died. The long illness which preceded her death had quite prepared him for it, and his heart was in the son.

The son was to justify him and be his compensation. He had fought his way up from the street—an especially unpromising street in concrete fact, unpaved, a lumpy dust-wallow in summer and a mud-wallow in winter, with crazy sidewalks of rotting planks in front of the cottages. He didn't know it was his intolerable outbursts that made men remember his beginnings while they forgot the lowly origins of his business peers. Amid a heap of wealth and the deference which wealth always brings, his uneasy egotism felt his origin like a brand upon him.

But the son was to start at the top, with all worldly advantages. In him the father's victory was to flower. So the bright little creature came into the world already invested with a passionate man's dear, hot, dreaming hopes which he would no more have given anybody a true glimpse of than he would have walked down La Salle Street naked.

But in time the bright creature developed a singular obstinacy about going its own way—never by bold opposition, always by supple evasion and indirection. Peter Huddicutt was confounded by the unbearable fact that this son, upon whom he secretly centered so much of his life, wouldn't mind him; the thing his fondest will had evoked was not amenable to his will.

FOR years there was a kind of unremitting, unacknowledged guerrilla warfare between them, with furious rages on the irascible father's part. Then came open revolt and the wild-oats period. The son would have been amazed to know how poignantly the father suffered—with all his secret hope and affection openly mocking him, his cherished son a triumph for his enemies.

Next came reformation, sobriety, diligence in business with an admirable aptitude in learning it—which was presently explained by confession of an engagement to wed Marion Lambert. That was just the crowning touch, for the Lamberts derived from that end of the social scale which was opposite to his own derivation, and he thought highly of the young lady.

No one would have guessed what this meant to Peter Huddicutt. Here were the bitterly deferred hopes coming true—multiplied, overflowing, ennobled, dazzling. His heart, deep hidden under the forbidding bark, was so full that sometimes when he sat beside Ted listening to his gay talk with a slight, awkward smile, he was penetrated by humility like a lover before his mistress. In a shambling, grouchy, inept sort of way he was always courting the young man—as by raising his salary, rearranging the upper floor of the house for his occupancy, making him a vice-president; but any open sign of love would have shamed him intolerably. . . .

Presently the clock gave forth a single low note. Peter Huddicutt started and glared up at the mechanical traitor. Its inexorable hands showed half-past nine, and the catastrophe descended upon him in full force.

The young man well knew what issues hung upon his appearance in court at ten o'clock. His reputation was at stake. Nothing but death could honorably keep him away, and in this familiar, workaday setting, Peter Huddicutt never thought of death. He thought his son was somehow scandalously implicated with the thieves and had betrayed him. That was the way his jealous, tempestuous nature operated—always ill-balanced, plunging desperately at a touch. All his hope and pride hung in

a balance; the balance tipped against him; whereupon he must hurl himself headlong upon the completed catastrophe which that connoted. Defeat and shame possessed him. For a little time he sat staring at the desk, half stunned by his inner turmoil.

Then the lava-flow of rage came, and he rang for his secretary. In a moment he rang again, and a frightened young woman stenographer stepped in from the anteroom to say Miss Betts was out.

AT two minutes past nine a hatchet-faced young man in a belted jacket and a cap with a long visor had come—with a sort of hungry dubiety—into the president's anteroom, inquiring for Miss Betts—or Mrs., he wasn't sure which.

"Miss, and right here," said the ample, middle-aged woman at the desk.

From his cap the young man extracted a plain, crumpled envelope which he extended. On it was written in faint pencil, in a woman's hand, *Mr. Huddicutt*; and across the end was an address in another hand.

"Why, you see," the man explained with his eager dubiety, "I drove a young gent and a girl out to 3847 Putterbaugh Avenue last night. There's the address. I wrote it down, for he said to be sure not forget it." He pointed to the heavier markings on the envelope. "When the young gent got out, he left his cane in the cab. He hollered and run after me down the street and got his cane. Then he gives me this envelope, and he says to bring it to you at nine sharp this morning and tell you where I took him, being sure to get the address right." He paused, all his eagerness and his doubt plainly on edge, and added: "And he said you'd gimme five dollars."

The envelope contained, beside Maggie's note, a torn bit of blue-silk thread. Miss Betts spread out the note with one hand while with the other she produced a five-dollar bill. A moment later she was saying rapidly to the young woman stenographer whom she had called in:

"Get me a taxi, quick, and sit here until I come back."

Even as she spoke, she was impatiently manipulating her telephone.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Saylor, the

manager," she said as soon as she got the detective-agency which the Huddicutt Trust Company patronized. Then: "Mr. Saylor? This is Miss Betts of the Huddicutt Trust. I'm coming around there at once in a taxi to pick you up. Be down at your street entrance. Have a good man with you and something that will break a door. Be sharp, Mr. Saylor; it's life or death."

AT five minutes past ten Mr. Barker, second vice-president, telephoned to President Huddicutt from the Criminal Court Building, saying Edwin W. Huddicutt had just appeared there to take the witness-stand.

At twenty-five minutes to one Mr. Barker telephoned again to say the witness had made a downright, convincing identification which an hour of hot cross-examination had failed to shake. Court had adjourned to one o'clock, when the cross-examination would be completed.

At half-past two Peter Huddicutt, in a most unusually subdued, chastened and humble frame of mind, put on his hat and shambled out on an errand.

At twenty minutes to three the witness came swiftly into the president's anteroom. It happened to be vacant at the moment, for Miss Betts had gone in to lay some letters on the president's desk. The witness dashed in there.

He had never perhaps been quite so effulgent, never shed an eager happiness quite so overpoweringly, as when he ran to the desk, seized the secretary's two hands, glowing at her—then tipped back his head and laughed triumphantly.

IN a moment he was telling her all about it—the dinner, the page fetching him Maggie's note with the gold pencil inside it. Had Mullens, in some muddled moment, given her the pencil, or had she stolen it from him?

"I wasn't thinking of a thing on earth but poor old Mullens. I was running right into it head on! We'd stopped, you see; the girl was getting out of the cab. She looked around at me, and some way—how could you account for it?—I looked down at my hand and saw the thread you tied there!"

For she had begged him to be very careful in all he did, because Tyrrel's friends would stop at hardly anything to compromise him and break down his testimony. She'd really feared outright murder.

Good old Betsy! Hadn't she been trying to make him remember ever since he was a lad in school and she'd helped him out of scrapes—tying a string to his finger sometimes? Time was when she hadn't been very successful in her efforts to make him remember, either. He laughed over that dolorously, as he sat on the corner of his father's desk, his hands clasped around an upthrust knee, shining affection and gratitude into her face.

Certainly that running off with a dubious young woman to an unknown address might be compromising enough. The thought had flashed through his mind when he saw the thread. But he'd had no time to do anything then; they were getting out of the cab, and he still didn't really doubt that Mullens had sent the girl. Yet, with the thread before his eyes, he'd cast an anchor to windward—left his stick in the cab, ran back to get it, slipped the cabman Maggie's note, promised him five dollars if he'd report to Miss Betts at the Huddicutt Trust Company promptly at nine next morning. If poor old Mullens had sent the girl, why, no harm could be done, because he'd be at the trust company in the morning when the cabman reported. If it was a trap, he'd have a powerful anchor to the windward.

"Of course, it all depended on who broke in there and discovered me first. If Bull Wilks' fellows came first, they'd have their case against me for the newspapers. You can believe I was mighty nervous for a while. But when I heard your voice at the door, I laughed and told Bull he could skip out the back way if he wanted to. He saw the game was up, and he skipped."

He laughed—hesitated a moment, contemplating his upthrust knee, a slight groove down his fair forehead. "I'm wondering," he added doubtfully in a lower voice, "whether I should tell Father."

Miss Betts' emollient voice replied:



Abruptly his eyes dimmed; he sprang from the desk, threw his arms around the ample, aging woman beside it and kissed her cheek, which was of no particular complexion, repeating: "Dear old Betsey!"

"I wouldn't, Ted. He wouldn't understand my part in it. That would involve too much explaining—going away back, my dear. Your father is an able man; he means to be a just man. But—well,"—she smiled a little,—"human affection is something he's never dealt in. He doesn't understand it."

The young man pondered that gravely for a moment. Many things which it implied—going away back—rose upon his mind. Staring soberly up at the secretary he murmured:

"That's true. . . . Dear old Betsy! I knew I could bank on you with my life! I knew they couldn't stop you with armor-plate! . . . Human affection!" Abruptly his eyes dimmed; he sprang from the desk, threw his arms around the ample, aging woman beside it and kissed her cheek, which was of no particular complexion, repeating: "Dear old Betsy!"

AT half-past three Peter Huddicutt sat alone at his desk in the president's office, mechanically looking over some letters—profound amazement in his mind, and in his heart an incurable ache.

He'd stepped into the anteroom and heard most of his son's conversation with his secretary. Cause enough there for amazement—the veritable Miss Betts who had stood at his elbow for twenty-five years and his own son! Affection in each, it seemed, had found the other, flowing under his very nose and all around him without his being in the least aware of it, as though he were impervious to it as glass is to electricity.

Human affection—perhaps that was something he really couldn't come in contact with, something from which his

temper insulated him. Cause there for heaviness of heart. Yet he had his consolation. His fierce passion had built for the son; the boy had begun at the top. Those early years of his own might have hardened him too much; but because he was hard as iron, if he should die to-morrow, his son would have five millions.

So Peter Huddicutt accepted it, with grimness on the surface and an ache underneath. He was going to Vice-President Barker's room—round-shouldered and lumbering, with a sheaf of papers in his hand—when his son came briskly in, effulgent and bubbling as usual. They talked for sixty seconds about the business detail which the young man wished advice on. The subject was disposed of.

Then with no premeditation Peter spoke of a quite different subject:

"I overheard what you told Miss Betts. I hope—sometime—there'll be a silk thread for me."

It was a short sentence, but his low voice grew unsteady before he finished it. He looked up at his son with humble eyes and put the free hand on his shoulder. It was as amazing as though one of the granite pillars had suddenly stooped, trembling, and begged for a rose.

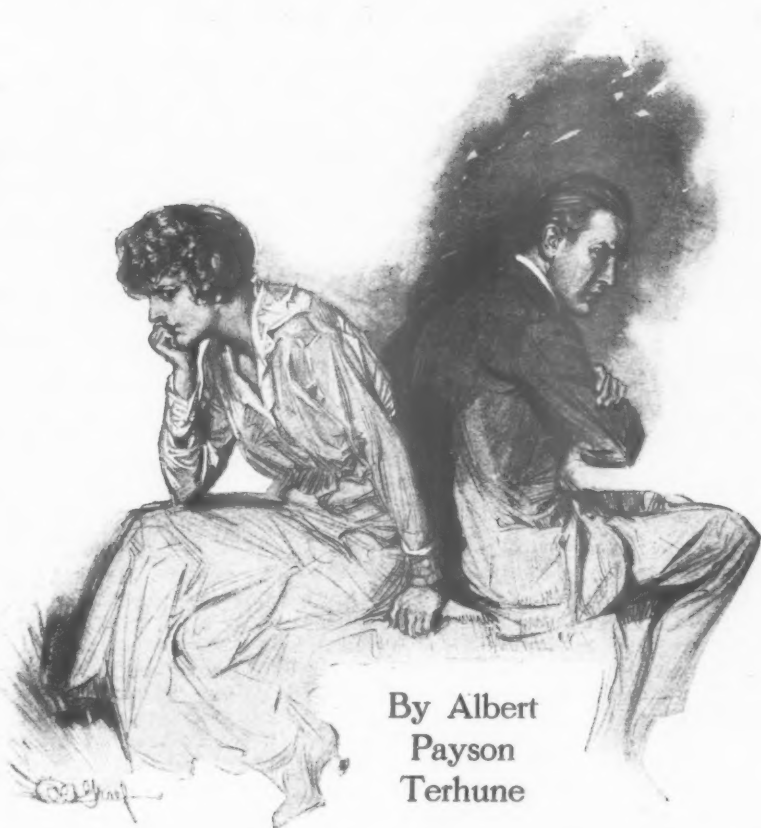
Sheer amazement disconcerted the young man. Staring at the elder, he stammered: "We must try, Father."

"Yes," said Peter, and removed his hand.

When the tall, awkward figure had disappeared, the young man still stood amazed, reproaching himself, a new world unrolling around him.

"It shall be that way," he said to himself.

LOTS of folks who should know consider Will Payne the keenest editorial writer in the land. He's also a distinguished novelist and a reporter of rare ability. But he's at his best in a short story. Others as incisive and as fascinating as "The Silk Thread" are coming in The Red Book Magazine. The next, "A Button Hook," will be in an early issue.



By Albert
Payson
Terhune

Getting Unmarried

WHEN Lee Dougan and his wife Marie had quarreled right industriously, and at ever-shortening intervals, for six years, it dawned on them that the door of the cage was wide open and that both were at liberty to escape.

It had been such a gem of a cage, at first! So completely had love been wreathed about its bars that Lee and Marie had not called it a cage at all, but a nest.

Then, as time thudded along, incompatibility took a hand in the game and began to gnaw away the love-festoons until, one after another, the cage-bars became visible. And they were

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBERT A. GRAEF

not even gilded bars. They were of rusty iron and very unbeautiful.

Novelty, infatuation, curiosity, romantic imagination, youth and propinquity—all these blend into so specious a substitute for love that it is no miracle the two young folk had mistaken them for the real thing. It is still less strange that with the gradual dwindling of these blended elements the truth stood forth, stripped as bare as the cage-bars themselves.

The truth was that the two Dougans

were in no way fitted to go on together with the life-journey. Each was still under thirty. Neither was hard to get on with—except for the other. The world doubtless held ideal mates for each of them—just as the world holds many substances with which either flint or steel may dwell with no resultant fire-flash—flint and steel being inoffensive enough except in contact with each other, and Lee and Marie being equally peaceful when they were not together.

Something like this the Dougans agreed on, after a particularly blazing quarrel, in the sixth year of their married life. The reaction from their pyrotechnic rage left them momentarily cold and logical. They talked over the whole subject with a fair semblance of reasonableness, and they came to certain sane conclusions:

First, that they could not hope to get along together, try as they might. Second, that it was not fair to waste both their lives in an endless series of battles, when the future might well be sunny for them both, with more congenial mates. Third, that a quiet divorce would solve the whole miserable problem.

Without temper or recrimination they reached this decision. It vaguely amazed them both that, for once, they had been able to decide on any important matter without a fight.

Together—and in more mutual amity than for many a long war-month—they fared to Cyrus Bonner, who had been the law-partner and chum of Marie's father and who had known both husband and wife all their lives.

No, the benevolent old white-haired man did not talk to them wisely and kindly for an hour, with the *vox humana* stop in his deep organ-voice, and leave them weeping remorsefully in each other's arms—ready to quarrel all over again within a week. Nor did the shrewd old lawyer pretend to accede and then play a brilliant trick on them whereby they might realize they really loved each other, past all belief.

NO, Bonner did nothing of the sort.

Like all the rest of the Dougans' intimates, he had watched for years their

wretched life together and had realized, like everyone else, that the ill-matched couple's one chance for life-happiness lay in separation. So he expounded as follows:

"It's the wisest move you young idiots ever made. And I'll arrange it for you without any trouble at all. It will be a matter of a mere handful of weeks. Of course, either of you could go to some such place as Reno and establish residence there. But—"

"I don't want—" began Marie; but Bonner went on:

"But that would mean a long delay. And besides, the courts have cast more or less doubt, lately, on such divorces. Every now and then some judge questions their legality. The newspapers take it up; and people who have gotten the divorces—and perhaps have married again—worry themselves sick."

"I've heard there are States where incompatibility is a ground for divorce," said Marie. "Is that true? And if it is, couldn't one of us—"

"Establish residence there?" supplemented Bonner. "Certainly you could, if time is no object to you. But I understood you children wanted this arranged as quickly as possible."

"We do!" declared Marie, while Lee nodded emphatically.

"Huh!" commented Bonner. "It's a joy to know there's *something* you can agree on. That brings me to the plan I wanted to suggest. Here in New York, divorces can be arranged quickly, and with no special publicity, if one has the cash and the influence. It's done every day. I advise you to let me get the divorce for you in this State."

"Go ahead!" approved Lee.

"The only drawback," hesitated Bonner, "is that New York recognizes only one cause for divorce. And—"

"Incompatibility?" asked Marie.

"No—infidelity."

"That lets us out, I'm afraid," sighed Lee. "Infidelity doesn't happen to be included in our large collection of parlor tricks. Think of something else."

"No," contradicted Bonner, "we'll stick to that, please."

"On the contrary," corrected Lee, "we'll stick *at* that. Pass on to the next

cage. I've been faithful to Marie, and I know she's been faithful to me. In fact, that has been our one marital accomplishment."

"It's never too late to mend," dryly quoted Bonner.

"I'm afraid it is," retorted Lee. "I've traveled clean. And if I can't get free except by smashing my wedding vows—why, I'll stay on in prison."

"Yes?" queried Bonner, wholly unimpressed, although Marie actually beamed on her virtuous mate. "Well, in a way, you're right. I have no use for unfaithful husbands or wives. But in my humble and nonlegal opinion, they are haloed saints compared to couples who turn their homes into hells, by quarreling and snarling and making each other miserable by their rotten tempers. Nothing personal! However, the statute-books don't agree with me—so we will stick to the statute-books. Lee, you'll have to give Marie enough evidence to let her get the divorce. Be a good fellow and let her divorce you. You'll be surprised to see how little harm it will do you, socially or otherwise. The other way around, it would wreck her name. But it will put scarcely a nick in yours."

LEE got to his feet and reached for his overcoat.

"We're in the wrong pew," he said tersely. "Come along, Marie."

"You'll sit down," curtly ordered Bonner, "and hear me out. I am not a yellow dog. I don't propose what you think I propose. And any lawyer would know I don't. There is a perfectly innocent way of arranging these things—a way that satisfies the statutes, and is done every day in the year. Why, lad, do you suppose one tenth of the husbands divorced for infidelity are really unfaithful? It's merely a shortcut to freedom. There's all the difference in the world between fact and evidence. And evidence is all I want you to supply. I can arrange it for you."

Lee, puzzled, nevertheless sat down.

"Go ahead!" he suggested. "It's all Greek to me, so far. Can you remember any good old English words to put the idea into? If you can—"

The lawyer reached for one of a

hundred calf-bound books from the shelf behind him, turned its leaves and presently began to read aloud.

"There's the statute," he said when he had finished; and turning to another book he added: "Here is a short digest of what constitutes 'evidence' to cover it."

Again he read. Then, closing the book, he concluded:

"I don't usually handle these cases myself, but I have a colleague who does. I'll make an appointment with him and send for you. He furnishes everything in the evidence-line—the detectives, the time, the place and the co-respondent."

"Horrible!" cried Marie, jumping up. "Come, Lee! We'll—"

"The co-respondent," added Bonner, paying no heed whatever to the shocked interruption, "has been co-respondent in no less than nineteen such cases. And—she is quite as good and pure and respectable as you are, my dear girl."

"You're too old for me to thrash," growled Lee, deep in his throat, "but—"

"And you," retorted the lawyer, "are too old for me to spank—unfortunately! Now, shut up, both of you, and listen to me! Miss Berdan is only twenty-three years old, but she is supporting a bed-ridden mother, by stenography, in my colleague's office. She is an ardent member of the Women's Uplift League in her own suburb. She is as pretty as a Greuze picture, I'm sorry to say. But she is so absurdly prim and proper that she would put pantalets on the bare legs of her piano—if she could afford to own one. Her virtue would make the chaste Diana seem a red-haired siren by contrast. So much excess virtue in such a pretty girl is like a—"

"What has all this to do with—"


"With your case? Miss Berdan is a professional co-respondent. She ekes out her stenographer's wages that way."

"I—"

"You will meet Miss Berdan," ordained Bonner, "at a date agreed on. You will drive with her to a hotel. You will go to a room there. You will lock the door. You will sit down and talk. Then, a few minutes later, detectives, employed by Marie, will break in. They will take oath they saw you drive to the

"Oh, it's delicious!" she cried. "It's like a scene in a French farce. The saintly co-respondent! Mr. Bonner, you are wonderful!"

"I am," modestly admitted the lawyer. "I concede that, without argument—but not in this one instance. The trick was old before I was born—like the tricks



hotel and register there as 'Mr. and Mrs. Lee Dougan'—or as 'Mr. and Mrs. John Smith.' They will further swear that they found you had locked the door of your room.

"That is all the evidence the court will require. Miss Berdan will figure in the case as 'a woman whose name could not be ascertained.' It will cost you a thumping big price, Lee—which you are well able to pay. Marie will get her divorce. You will get a tiny and easily removable smirch on your white reputation. Miss Berdan will get a fee of one hundred and fifty dollars—which will enable her to pay for her mother's next operation or for her year's contribution to Foreign Missions. It's all quite simple, as you see."

Lee Dougan did not "see," for a moment or two of blankness. But the quicker-witted Marie did. Her laugh—genuine and girlish—broke the dusty silence of the room.

Miss Abigail Berdan, as Bonner had said, was twenty-three years old—and she looked scarce twenty.

Charles Alfred

that are planned for defeating every statute, as fast as the statute is made. It has been done a thousand times. A couple want a divorce. The New York law won't let them get it, except on one ground. So they fake up the evidence and go through the whole business—without the loss of one shred of self-respect or decency."

"What a glorious story for me to tell, too!" exulted Marie. "I can—"

"No!" snapped Bonner, his light manner suddenly freezing into iron grimness. "No! That's one thing you must never do, either of you. The court is always on the lookout for it. At one hint of collusion, as it's called, your case will fall to pieces. The court must believe—officially, at least—that Lee is really guilty. I want you both to understand that. Let there be a shadow of evidence that there is any collusion—and you can whistle for your divorce. Why, that point is so important that a man's or woman's own unsupported confession of guilt, in a divorce-suit, is not accepted as fact. Remember, please!"

"I'll—I'll remember!" promised Marie, frightened at his vehemence.

"And by the way," ended Bonner jocosely, turning to Lee, "don't try to flirt with Miss Berdan or even to jolly her. I merely mention it, because the last man thought he would add verisimilitude to his rôle of lover by squeezing her hand. She punctured his ear with a hatpin—by mistake for his eye. Hands off!"

LEE DOUGAN slumped against the wall in a corner of the Grand Central waiting-room. He felt hideously ill at ease and scared. The palms of his hands were very damp, and the roof of his mouth was very dry. He was letter-perfect in his rôle, through long coaching. Yet he shook with stage-fright.

One or twice, as he waited, he furtively drew out an envelope on the back of which he had scribbled his instructions. This he consulted; then he slipped it back into his pocket. And his worried glance would stray to three men who chatted, elaborately at ease, near a ticket-window fifty feet away.

Though the three were, technically,

in his own employ and had gone over the program's details most carefully with him in Bonner's office, the previous day, yet he forced himself to remember he must not seem to know them by sight. He longed to ease the tension of suspense by crossing to them now and asking foolishly if they were quite certain there would be no hitch in the performance.

"Lord!" he groaned, to himself, "it must be *hell* to be a Don Juan! Where does a man get the nerve? I'd as soon be a suspected English spy in the Kaiser's tent!"

Crowds from incoming trains jostled past him. In every passenger's eye he seemed to read contemptuous knowledge in his illicit mission. At last—a long, long last—a woman detached herself from a bevy of town-visiting suburbanites and after a glance of inquiry around the big rotunda came slowly toward him.

Miss Abigail Berdan, as Bonner had said, was twenty-three years old—and she looked scarce twenty. She had masses of fluffy ash-blond hair, a roses-and-cream complexion, two enormous and wondering blue eyes and a tiny mouth. Only the merest hint of coldness behind the big eyes and a soft squareness of chin and a firmness of the red lips gave the lie to her general aspect of childishness. Slender she was, and tiny and very graceful.

It was on the face, rather than the figure, that Lee Dougan now fixed his panic gaze. It was a face—if Bonner were not misinformed—that had caused nineteen divorces. And it might well be also "the face that launched a thousand ships"—including a flotilla of submarines.

A picture-hat crowned the mop of fluffy hair. A white georgette crêpe dress fitted the sweetly rounded form as though molded about it. The shoes were absurdly small. From one gloved wrist dangled a white bead bag, worked with pink rambles.

Lee Dougan felt a sudden desire to cry or to run away—or both. His single glimpse of Miss Berdan, the day before, at Bonner's office, should have prepared him, but it had not. He felt that if he were to see this bewitching woman a

million times, each time would carry its own separate and distinct shock. Not that Miss Berdan bewitched *him*. Venus herself could not have done that, in his present panic. But she was the type of girl not only to draw attention, but to seize it by the throat—an ideal co-respondent, if publicity were the object—as it was.

ONCE more, in his bemused mind, he ran over the story the three detectives were to tell. Yes, it began something like this:

"Mrs. Dougan told the boss of our agency she suspected her husband was meeting another woman. So the boss detailed us to watch him. We followed him from his office to the Grand Central. He stopped near Number Blank train-entrance and looked at his watch. Then he waited. Pretty soon a woman came in from the train-shed and looked around her like she was expecting somebody. Mr. Dougan went up to her and they walked away together to the taxi-stand, and then—"

Well, that was enough for the moment. But suppose the detectives should be asked in what manner he had greeted the unknown damsel? And suppose the sanctity of a court oath should force them to say he had slunk sheepishly up to her as though he feared she might bite him?

That reflection roused Lee's fear of collusion-suspicion. With a mighty effort at jauntness, he shambled across to meet the advancing co-respondent. His visage wore a look of ardent welcome that might readily have been mistaken for the facial accompaniment to "The Mad Ravings of John McCullough."

"Howdy do?" he croaked, through the stark nervousness that sanded his throat.

"The taxicabs are over to the right," was her amorous response to his lovely greeting.

Something about her words and her unexpectedly businesslike manner seemed to preclude merry repartee. So in silence he plodded along beside her toward the taxicab-stand. He felt ridiculously like a small boy whose pretty elder sister is

walking him off to the woodshed for a whipping. Added to this, the suspecting and censoring gaze of all East Forty-second Street seemed fixed on the guilty pair.

Lee recalled the caddish boasts of an office-mate, who was forever bragging of lawless feminine conquests. He now morbidly decided that the fellow was entitled to a hero medal—or to an Ananias badge.

Once he looked sidewise over his shoulder. Yes, at a distance the three detectives were duly following.

Miss Abigail Berdan primly stepped into the nearest of a dozen waiting taxicabs, without waiting for her escort to help her aboard. Lee turned to the waiting chauffeur.

"Hotel Ginevra," he said—so low that the man asked:

"*Hotel Ginevra*, did you say?"

The chauffeur voiced the query in a tone that seemed to echo and reëcho through the vaulted spaces of the station. He grinned knowingly, too. So did the other chauffeurs within hearing. So did more than one hurrying passer-by. Apparently the Hotel Ginevra was known to many, and not one of them mistook it for a Methodist Conference Headquarters.

Every grin was like a kick, to the writhing Dougan. In his heart he cursed Bonner for not arranging a less notorious setting for the ghastly farce. But he set his teeth, and the gloomy mile-long ride began.

Nervousness, ill-temper, dread of his icy companion, produced something like a daze in the man's brain. Mechanically he paid the sympathetically roguish chauffeur. Mechanically he mounted the tall steps of the narrow and severe-looking brownstone building which has perhaps been the repository of more shrouded scandals than has any other hostelry of its age in New York.

THREE minutes later a small and plump and courteously greasy Italian clerk ushered Lee and Miss Berdan into a large, barren sitting-room and discreetly closed the door after him in departing. The room had been engaged beforehand, through Bonner. It had served this same



At his first step, Miss Abigail Berdan had risen and barricaded herself into the corner with her rickety chair. "If you dare lay a hand on me!" she cried sternly, "if you so much as dare touch my hand with the tip of one of your fingers, I warn you I shall bring a heavy damage-suit against you—"

immorally moral purpose many a time and oft. Its sole furniture consisted of two stiff chairs and a tiny marble-topped table. An old-fashioned blue-rose carpet of awful pattern covered its floor.

Poor Lee stood perplexed and staring in the middle of the floor. But his fair companion knew exactly what to do. Picking up one of the two chairs, and disdaining his efforts to carry it for her, she placed it in a far corner of the room and sat herself down in it. Lee dazedly followed her example—taking the other chair into the opposite corner and seating himself. He blinked dully at her.

For an instant neither spoke. Then Miss Berdan asked with much suddenness:

"You locked the door, didn't you?"

"N-no," he stammered. "I forgot to."

"Do it, right away!" she commanded—adding severely: "The locked door

is the real evidence. You might have spoiled everything."

With the air of a martyr who locks himself into a den with a man-eating tiger, Dougan turned the key. Then he sat down again and braced himself for the thunderous assault of the detectives upon the door.

And nothing happened.

Minute by minute slipped away. Lee strained his ears for the sound of the thudding threefold tread on the stairs and the ensuing crash of the flimsy lock.

"Bonner said they'd break in, almost as soon as we got here," he ventured by and by, appealing to Miss Berdan as the novice to the professional. "How long do they generally wait?"

"Not so long as this," she returned.

"But that's a new desk-clerk downstairs. He may not know anything at all. I

didn't like the familiar way he looked at me. It lacked respect."

"Would—would you like something to eat or—to drink, while we wait?" asked Lee after another and longer pause.

"Sir!" she flashed—and he shrank before the tone and the daintily fierce glare that went with it.

Thinking she had not understood him, he said:

"I asked if you'd like a drink or—"

"I am a lady," was her frosty reply. "I do not lunch with gentlemen. I do not drink with anybody."

"I only mentioned it," he humbly apologized, "because I thought it might be kind of slow for you, sitting here, like this. It is for *me*, I know."

She glared at him a moment longer. Then, apparently convinced of his good intent, she relented ever so little. Fishing in her white bead bag, she said:

"I have here a copy of the June report of our Ladies' Uplift League. If you care to read it while we are waiting, it will give you some idea of the splendid work we are doing among our sinning sisters."

"Thanks!" he grunted crossly. "But I won't bother you. It's better fun to study this exquisite carpet-pattern."

She snapped shut the bead bag, glowing at her unregenerate accomplice.

"Of course," he said hastily, in an effort to soothe her resentment, "I fully realize how fearfully it would blacken both our characters in the eyes of the court if the detectives should testify that they burst in here and found one of us busily reading an Uplift League tract, while the other sat in the farthest corner alone. It would savor too much of a bacchanalian orgy. And I feel I could never face the censorious world after such a revelation of my guilt."

Plainly his reply nonplused the girl. She puckered her pretty eyelids and peered askance at him. A hand-organ in the street struck up a fox-trot. And as it did so, the devil of mischief entered into Lee Dougan.

NOW that the first nervous strain was over, his buoyant spirits rebounded. He was seized with a crazy whim further

to shock this fascinatingly repelling maiden who was his fellow-captive.

"That's a catchy tune," he observed, getting up and taking a step toward her. "How about whiling away a few of the weary moments with a fox-trot? The floor is pretty bum, but—"

He got no further. At his first step, Miss Abigail Berdan had risen and barricaded herself into the corner with her rickety chair.

"If you dare lay a hand on me," she cried sternly, "if you so much as dare touch my hand with the tip of one of your fingers, I warn you I shall bring a heavy damage-suit against you for disorderly conduct and for—"

"Have mercy!" he implored, returning to his chair. "Spare what fragment is left of my good name! Think of the damning headlines in the papers: 'Beautiful Co-respondent Sues Lover, — Claims He Touched Her Hand with One of His Finger-tips, While at Hotel Ginevra with Her. —Ugly Crowd Gathers at Jail, Threatening to Lynch Monster!' Why, Miss Berdan, it would—"

A knock at the door interrupted his hysteric gayety—not the imperative thump for which he had been listening, but a discreet tapping.

"You can't come in!" shouted Lee, belatedly remembering his carefully rehearsed cue. "We have engaged this room and I refuse to unlock the door. Go away."

Then he braced himself for the smashing of the lock. Instead, through the keyhole percolated an oily and low-pitched voice—the voice of the Italian clerk who had ushered them to the room.

"Listen, sir!" whispered the clerk. "You better go, you and the little lady, and go *now*. Three detectives have been downstairs asking for you. They wanted me to let them see the register or tell them what room you had. I stalled them as long as I could. Then I left one of the waiters talking to them and I sneaked up here to warn you. I can get you out the back way, if you hurry. But they're likely to be up here any minute. And I may not be able to steer them off."

Lee and Miss Berdan gaped stupidly

at each other. Then the woman said briskly:

"It's no use. If we should stay and wait for them, after such a warning, it would look too much like collusion. We'll have to go."

ON one of the side-streets that serve as tap-roots for the luridly blossoming stem known as Broadway, stands a four-story "converted" dwelling house, with a twenty-five foot frontage. In front of it, plainly visible from Broadway, hangs the sign: "Odalisque Restaurant."

It is like fifty other restaurants on side-streets off Broadway. Seldom are more than a dozen people at a time to be seen consuming its sixty-cent table d'hôte meal in the main dining-room. The per capita profit on such meals is perhaps eleven cents. The proprietors of the restaurants pay something like four thousand dollars a year for rent and make still further disbursements whose nature they themselves best know. From all this, one would think there could be scant profit in such restaurants. Yet many of their proprietors have retired after less than ten years, worth more than a quarter-million dollars. Which goes to show how rich a man may become in a short time, if only he will save his earnings.

In a cubby-hole private dining-room of the Odalisque Restaurant, three days after the Hotel Ginevra fiasco, sat Lee Dougan and Miss Abigail Berdan. No food was on the white-clothed table. Miss Berdan sat at the window, regarding the calisthenics of two rug-beaters in the yard below. Lee stood fidgeting near the door, studying a kaleidoscopic chromo entitled "Kiss and Make Up."

They had met at the Grand Central, as before, and had come hither by Bonner's direction. And again the pursuing sleuth-hounds failed to break in upon them. For ten minutes they had waited thus. At the end of five more endless and grumpily silent minutes, a muffled rap sounded on the door.

"Here they come!" said Lee eagerly.

But they did not. Instead, as before, a voice filtered in—this time the voice

of the waiter who had shown them to the room.

"Say, gentleman!" he announced in a hoarse undertone. "Three plain-clothes guys come nosin' around here, just after you landed. I was wise to 'em in a second. I told 'em youse had come in here, all right, all right, but that we didn't have no rooms vacant, so you had went again. Thought you'd like to know. I'd hate to see the baby doll get in wrong. No offense!"

Miss Abigail Berdan, in cold impatience, snatched up her reticule and stamped out of the room, leaving Dougan to reward the faithful waiter with a collusion-disarming tip of the same magnitude as that he had pressed upon the vigilant clerk at the Ginevra.

TWO days afterward a taxi bore them from the Grand Central to a caravansary near Longacre Square. Here, in a stuffy room, they sat for thirty everlasting minutes. This time Lee—having been sternly admonished by Bonner—made no airy overtures of dance nor even of conversation to his confederate, but sat vexedly silent, awaiting deliverance.

At last the room-telephone tinkled. Lee answered the summons. A gruff yet excessively friendly voice hailed him.

"Say, bo!" began the unknown. "I just did you one grand turn. I saw you an' the chicken get into a taxi at the Gran' Centr'l. My taxi was just next to it. A second later three square-toes piles into my cab an' tells me to trail you. I see your taxi stop in front of the Cowperthwaite, so I put on all the speed I had. An' I run them three chaps north with me to Hundred-an'-nineteenth Street. They kept a-hammerin' on the glass, but I was deaf an' I never stopped till I got here. Then I told 'em I'd lost you. I said I was out of gas and I'd have to stop an' get some, before I could take 'em back downtown. I'm 'phoning from the garage, up here. So you can beat it before we get there. I just described you to the Cowperthwaite desk-clerk an' asked him to c'nnect me with your room. Your girl's sure one little queen. She's dead easy to look at. I'm glad I could do her a good turn."

I'll be at the Pink Taxi stand, at Forty-fourth, in an hour, if you want to see me. So long!"

Turning to the mystified Abigail, as he hung up the receiver, Lee Dougan lifted his voice and spoke oratorically—thus:

"Dear fellow-sinner, here is where I drop out of the act—very definitely and very permanently. When I was little, they used to tell me that all our copy-book maxims would help us in later life.

Of course, I found out long ago that that was a lie. But if those maxims wouldn't help, I thought at least they wouldn't hinder. This past week I've learned that every plan of mine is upset by one of them. And that one maxim, O coyest of co-respondents, is '*All the world loves a lover.*' Do you understand me?"

She was eying him him in disapproving bewilderment. And he meandered on, in the same vein:

Crossing the floor in two strides, he cut short her speech by dropping on his knees at her side and flinging both arms around her. Then, simultaneously, two things smote his consciousness—some one was frantically trying the spring-locked door, from without; also, the woman who turned a fiercely horrified face toward her embracer was not Marie at all, but an entire stranger—not only a stranger, but at least fifty years old.



"'All the world loves a lover,' Miss Berdan. If I had stolen a pair of shoes or tried to dodge a subpoena or slain my mother-in-law or punched a cop or forgotten to tip a hat-boy,—in short, if I had committed any other sin on earth, and the detectives were after me,—there would have been a hundred people to betray my whereabouts and blithely lead my pursuers to it. *But—*"

"Mr. Dougan!" she interrupted sharply, as in his rhetorical zeal he moved toward her. "Not one step nearer! Explain, please, what you—"

"Whereas," flowed on the orator—albeit, after a glance at the hatpin Miss Berdan had drawn from her bonnet, the speaker reversed the direction of his stride,—"whereas, a noble army of clerks and waiters and boozy taxi-bandits have taken one look at you and formed a solid and impregnable wall of defense around me, to shield me from harm. And all because they think I am in love with a girl who, palpably, is not my wife. If I'd swiped a loaf of bread to save my Mormon family from starving, they'd have let the law take its course. But 'All the world loves a lover.' It has cost me five days' hire for three detectives, and it has also cost me a

series of ungodly tips and other incidentals—to learn that noble truth! But it is *learned*.

"Now let's get out of here. I'm through. If Mrs. Dougan wants a divorce, let her go to Reno and get it. At this crucial point in the drama, that



At a vigorous shoulder-shove the thin door burst its lock and swung inward, precipitating a large and noisy man into the room. "I've caught you!" roared the newcomer. "Caught you at last!"

talented young comedian Mr. Lee Dougan throws down the alluring rôle of *Patsy* and walks meditatively off the stage. Good-by, Miss Berdan. 'Twenty' seems to be an unlucky number in your co-correspondence school. You may have lured other victims into the quick-sands of divorce, at one hundred and fifty dollars. But *I* am immune. I may add, in closing, that I would rather be the poor working girl that I am, than the thing your gold would make me."

LEAVING the utterly dumfounded damsel puckering her eyes at him in hopeless bewilderment, he stalked out. Down the dusky street he rambled, uncertain whether to laugh or to swear. Then, as his mind grew calmer, his thoughts drifted back to a theme that, unbidden, had been intruding on them, more and more, for nearly a week.

Man is a habit-slave. And for six stormy years Marie Dougan had been Lee's life-habit. To her he had always gone home at the day's end. And now there was no home to go to, for since the break, Lee had roomed at a club and Marie was staying at a big family-hotel.

The apartment was closed, the apartment to which he had returned nightly for six years, the apartment which Marie (with all her faults) had made home for him, and where, sometimes, at least, they had been ever so happy. (Even the trenches get to seeming like home—if one stays in them long enough. So does one's corner of an office.)

No, he could not get Marie out of his mind—not yet, certainly. She intruded therein, more and more strongly, during every day and night of separation. So strongly was she entrenched there, by habit, that as the days wore on, he naturally began to mistake his mind for his heart.

He missed her. He missed her a lot. And now dusk was coming on. Not yet adjusted to his new freedom, he was homesick for the cage. Hitherto the excitement of evidence-making had buoyed him up. But now that he had definitely abandoned the idea—

After all, why should they be divorced? A little mutual self-restraint and forbearance would surely avert

future quarrels; even though the same wholesome remedy had failed so often in the past. In future it could be different—it *would* be different! He wanted Marie. He wanted to kiss and make up.

A wave of tenderness—a wave so vehement as easily to be mistaken for love—welled up in Lee. And with it came swift resolution. Beckoning a taxi, he bade the chauffeur drive him to the hotel where Marie was stopping.

AS he whizzed along, he felt an odd exultation—a sense of home-coming. He would beg his wife to take him back. She, he knew, must be as lonely and as blue as himself. She would surely consent. She would be *glad* to consent. He knew her well enough to be certain of that.

The desk-clerk at the hotel was an old acquaintance. Lee and Marie had stopped here together several times while the apartment was under repair. At sight of Dougan the clerk nodded cordially and paused for a moment in his task of blocking a crossfire of questions from two country guests.

"You'll find Mrs. Dougan in 745," he said. "She came in just a minute ago."

Upward went the elevator. At the seventh floor Dougan got out. Along the corridor he hurried, reading the room-numbers as he went. A man, pacing the lower end of the corridor, stopped to watch him—at first idly, then more intently.

The door of 745 was not tight closed, but was on a crack. Realizing the value of whirlwind tactics, Lee did not knock. First listening cautiously for an instant, he pushed open the door, stepped in and closed it behind him. The spring-latch clicked softly.

She was sitting draped in a dirty pale-blue negligee, at a dressing-mirror, her back to him. Nor did she turn from her task of arranging her hair.

"That you, dear?" she asked carelessly. "You're back sooner than I—"

Her idle words of greeting went all but unheard by the whirlwind wooer. Crossing the floor in two strides, he cut short her speech by dropping on his knees at her side and flinging both arms around her.

Then, simultaneously, two things smote his consciousness—some one was frantically trying the spring-locked door, from without; also, the woman who turned a fiercely horrified face toward her embracer was not Marie at all, but an entire stranger—not only a stranger, but at least fifty years old—uncompromisingly ugly, bespectacled, grim. A *horrible* woman, to look on!

Even the best hotel-clerks make blunders sometimes—especially if they are badgered by questions when sick with the grippe. Nor is it wholly unprecedented that the clerk in question should have told Lee his wife was in 745, and immediately afterward informed the country visitors that the curtain would rise on *Götterdämmerung* at the Metropolitan, at the mystic hour of "Suite 324A."

AT a vigorous shoulder-shove the thin door burst its lock and swung inward, precipitating a large and noisy man into the room.

Lee Dougan untangled his arms from about the splutteringly terrified crone and lurched to his feet. But the man glared past him, at her.

"I've caught you!" roared the newcomer. "Caught you at last! It was worth all the days I've prowled around that measly dark hallway. I've *caught* you! And here's the maid for witness. She saw. And she can swear the door was locked, too. Now I'll just find out this gibbering co-respondent's name. And the rest will be plain sailing."

"His name," volunteered the pleurably excited maid, "is Mr. Lee Dougan. I know, 'cause he stopped here before, lots of times."

"Have it any way you like!" snarled Lee, sizzling with helpless wrath. "Now that I don't want it any more, I'm getting, for nothing, what I gave three sleuths and a professional man-eater a week's pay for bungling. God bless our home! Send for the gong-wagon and an electric chair, if you choose. Only, first, let me get out of this before my wife hears where I am. It needs only that. She'd believe—she'd be dead sure to believe I'd—"

"Here!" stormed the husband.

"And madam," went on Lee, unheeding, "as a last favor to a dying man, will you speed my departure by letting go of my arm?"

The woman paused in a gesture of lofty repugnance, to find she could not make the gesture at all—because, unconsciously, both her hands were still imprisoning Dougan's sleeve in a spasmodic grip.

"Stop grabbing him like that, in my presence!" bawled her husband as she belatedly snatched away her hands and hid them behind her. "Have you no shame?"

"IF she hasn't any," came an icy-sweet voice from the doorway, "she can borrow enough of it from Mr. Dougan's face, just now, to last her a lifetime. Lee, is this the lady Mr. Bonner said was so pretty? If she is—"

"Who the devil are *you*?" demanded the avenging husband, adding as a courteous afterthought: "Get out of here!"

"I am Mrs. Lee Dougan," answered Marie, categorically. "The desk-clerk 'phoned me that he'd sent my husband to this suite by mistake. And I came to look for him. As for 'getting out,' I shall be ever so glad to. Come, Lee."

"You're his wife, hey?" snapped the Avenger. "Then maybe it'll interest you to know he sneaked into my room, two minutes ago and I busted in and found him with his—"

"Come, Lee," gently reiterated Marie. "This person is making a great deal of noise. It can't possibly be good for his poor throat. Let's leave him."

"Marie!" gasped Lee. "You *understand*? You don't believe—"

"I understand you got into a howl-fest concert, by mistake for my room," she told him. "The clerk can prove it was a mistake, if this vocalist tries to be horrid about it. For a minute, when I looked in, I was afraid you had lost your sense of beauty. And it hurt me. But I *do* understand. Anyway, even if it were all true,—the things this noisy person says,—I think I'd forgive you. I've—I've missed you so, Lee!"

And Lee Dougan and Marie lived happily ever after—for the best part of a week.

Résumé of the
Opening Chapters of
"THE MYSTERY
OF THE
HASTY ARROW"

By Anna Katharine Green

Synopses in The Red Book Magazine are different from the ordinary serial synopses. They convey not only the action of the novel, but the spirit of the story as well. You can read this and begin the story with an adequate knowledge of the theme.

THE hour of noon had just struck, and the few visitors still lingering among the curiosities of the great museum were suddenly startled by the sight of one of the attendants running down the broad central staircase, loudly shouting:

"Close the doors! Let no one out! An accident has occurred, and nobody's to leave the building."

There was but one person near either of the doors, and as he chanced to be a man closely connected with the Museum,—being, in fact, one of its most active directors,—he immediately turned about and in obedience to a gesture made by the attendant, ran up the marble steps, followed by some dozen others.

At the top they all turned, as by common consent, toward the left-hand gallery, where a tableau greeted them which few of them will ever forget.

Tragedy was there in its most terrible, its most pathetic, aspect. The pathos was given by the victim,—a young and pretty girl lying face upward on the tessellated floor with an arrow in her breast and death stamped unmistakably on every feature,—the terror by the look and attitude of the woman they saw kneeling over her—a remarkable woman, no longer young, but of a presence to hold the attention, even if the circumstances had been of a far less tragic nature.

"Her name?" repeated the woman bending over the dead girl, on being questioned by the Curator and the Director. "How should I know? I was passing through this gallery and had just stopped to take a look into the court when this young girl bounded by me from behind and flinging up her arms, fell with a sigh to the floor.

"My name is Ermentrude Taylor," she added after a moment. "I came to look at the bronzes. I should like to go now."

THE famous Detective Gryce—an old man now, attended by his assistant Sweetwater—arrives to take charge of the situation. He questions Mrs. Taylor further, but she seems distraught by the shock to the point of insanity; for when Gryce asks her if she is wife or widow, she replies:

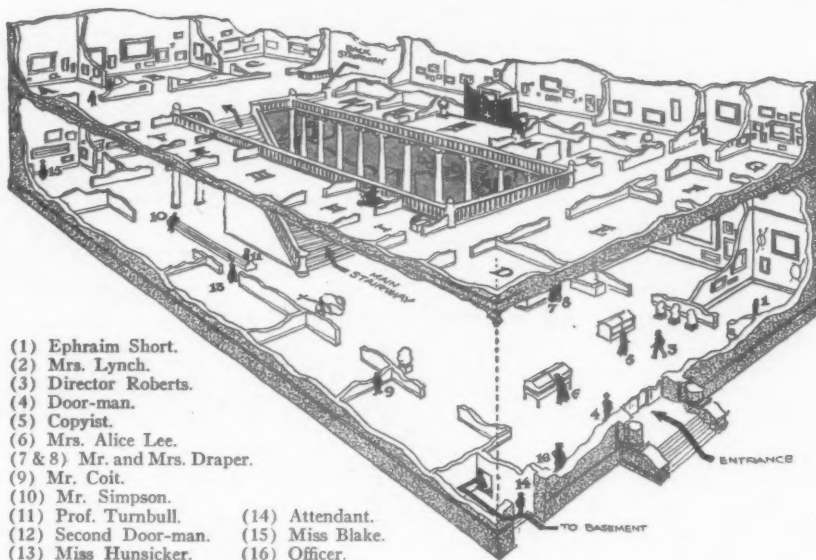
"A widow within the hour. . . . My husband was living this morning. I knew it from the joyous hopes with which my breast was filled. But with the stroke of noon the blow fell. I was bending above the poor child when the vision came, and I saw him gazing at me across a desert so immeasurable that nothing but death could create such a removal. At that moment I felt his soul pass; and so I say that I am a widow."

Abandoning this direction of inquiry, Gryce orders each of the other people in the building to take the precise position occupied at the moment the alarm was given. He then questions each, but without getting any vital clue.

Correy, however, a Museum attendant, discovers leaning against a door behind a tapestry across the court from where the girl fell, a strung bow. The door behind the tapestry shuts off an unused circular staircase leading to the Curator's office below.

Now a new and strange figure enters the mystery—that of a young Englishman who had not appeared at the round-up of the occupants of the building. A long questioning extracts from him his story.

HIS name was Travis; he had seen and fallen in love with the murdered girl in England, but had worshiped from afar. He had followed her and her companion on shipboard to America and to the New York hotel where the older



woman had registered herself as Madame Duclos and the girl as Barbara Willetts.

Next morning—this morning, the day of the murder—he had seen Madame Duclos put Miss Willetts into a taxicab, first pinning on the girl's corsage a bouquet. He had followed Miss Willetts to the Museum; and at the moment of her death (according to his statement) he had been standing watching her from behind one of the big vases by the tapestry across the court from her. He had seen nothing which explained her death. He had at first been too shocked to move, and later he had seated himself unobserved behind the easel of a copyist in another room.

AN investigation discloses that Madame Duclos hurriedly left the hotel immediately after Miss Willetts' departure for the Museum. She has not reappeared. A piece of cloth, apparently torn from the skirt she is wearing, is found caught on a loose nail of her trunk; this and the other baggage of herself and Miss Willetts seems to have been hurriedly searched through and then abandoned. A reward is offered for news of Madame Duclos' whereabouts.

Other facts are brought to light in the next few hours: there are no fingerprints on the bow; Correy now recognizes the bow as one which had been stored along with other material not on exhibition, in the cellar; in the dust of the unused circular staircase three sets of tracks are found: two of a man going down, once wearing rubbers and once not; and one of a man wearing rubbers, coming up.

Gryce now tries an experiment. He has an Indian Bowman shoot at a dummy figure placed where Miss Willetts fell, and from the angle of the wound calculates that the fatal arrow was fired from behind the pedestal opposite to that which concealed Travis. And now one more curious clue is found: a loop of cloth such as is used to confine an umbrella is discovered lying on the floor of Room B; and umbrellas have never been allowed in the Museum. Do the stitch-marks on this loop indicate that it has served to support some other object?



The Mystery of The Hasty Arrow

A Fascinating Detective-story Novel

By Anna Katharine Green

CHAPTER XIII

REFRESHED by a night's rest and ready to take up his task, Mr. Gryce sat in his library next morning, waiting the expected message from Sweetwater. Meanwhile he studied, with a fuller attention than he had been able to give it the evening before, the memorandum which this young fellow had handed him of his day's work. A portion of this may be interesting to the reader. Against the list of people registered on his chart as present in the Museum at the moment of tragedy, he had inscribed such details concerning them as he could gather in the short time allotted him.

MEMORANDUM:

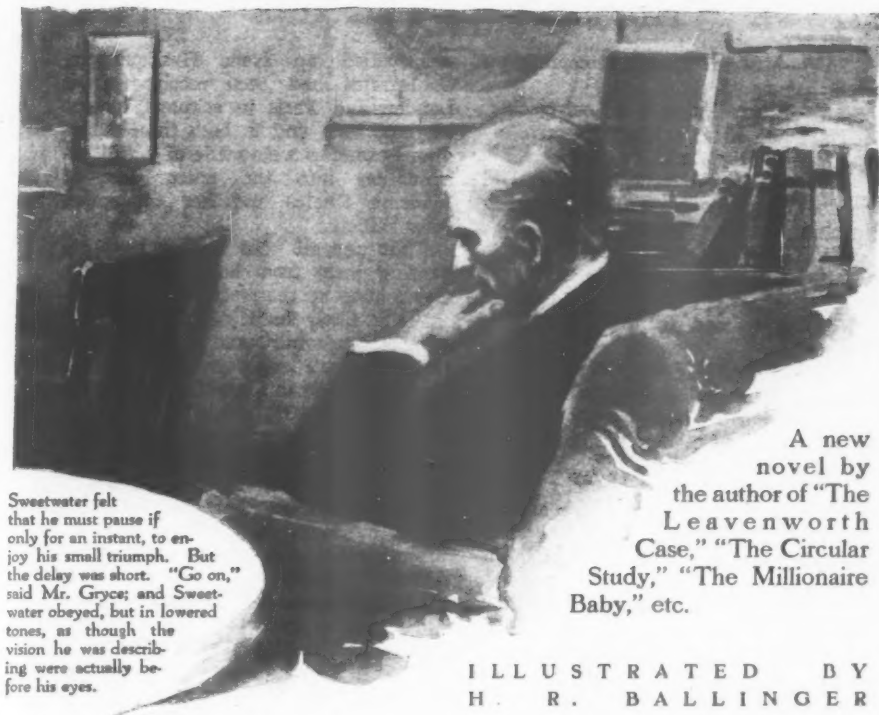
I—Ephraim Short. A sturdy New Englander visiting New York for

the first time. Has a big story to take back. Don't care much for broken marbles and pictures so dingy you cannot tell what you are looking at; but the sight of a lot of folks standing up like scarecrows in a field, here and there all over a great building, because something had happened to somebody, will make a story the children will listen to for years.

Address taken, and account of himself verified by telegraph.

II—Mrs. Lynch. Widow, with a small house in Jersey and money to support it. No children. Interested in church work. Honest and of reliable character. Only fault a physical one—extreme nervousness.

III—Mr. Marshall Roberts, director, active in his work, member of the Union League and an aspirant for the high office of U. S. Senator. Lives in bachelor



Sweetwater felt that he must pause if only for an instant, to enjoy his small triumph. But the delay was short. "Go on," said Mr. Gryce; and Sweetwater obeyed, but in lowered tones, as though the vision he was describing were actually before his eyes.

A new novel by the author of "The Leavenworth Case," "The Circular Study," "The Millionaire Baby," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
H. R. BALLINGER

apartment 67 W. Blaisdel Street. A universally respected man of unquestioned integrity and decided importance. Close friend of Curator Jewett.

IV—Eben Clarke, door-man. Been long in the employ of Museum. Considered entirely trustworthy. Home in decent quarter of W. 80th St. Wife and nine children, mostly grown. Never been abroad. Hasn't any foreign correspondence.

V—Emma Sutton, an art enthusiast, gaining her living by copying old masters. Is at Museum six days in the week. It was behind her easel Travis found a hiding-place in Room H.

VI—Mrs. Alice Lee, widowed sister of Edward Cronk Tailor, 0659 Sixth Ave. Lives with brother. Kindly in disposition, much liked and truthful to a fault. No acquaintance abroad.

VII-VIII—John and Mary Draper, husband and wife, living in East Orange, N. J. Decent, respectable folk with no foreign connections.

IX—Henry Arthur Coit, young man, none too bright but honest to the core. Impossible to connect him with this affair.

X—Charles Simpson, resident of Minneapolis. In town on business, stopping at Hotel St. Denis. Eager to return home, but willing to remain if requested to do so. Hates foreigners; thinks the United States greatest country on earth.

XI—John Turnbull, college professor; one of the new type, alert, observant and extremely precise. Not apt to make a misstatement.

XII—James Hunter, door-man, a little old for his work, but straight as a string and methodical to a fault. No wife, no child. Bank account more than sufficient for his small wants.

XIII—Miss Charlotte Hunsicker, one of last season's débutantes. Given to tennis and all outdoor sports generally. Offhand but stanch. It was she who gave a woman's care to Mrs. Taylor when the latter fainted in Room B.

XIV—Museum attendant coming up from basement.

XV—Eliza Blake, a school-teacher, convalescing after a long illness.

XVI—Officer Rudd.

XVII—Tommy Evans, boy scout. Did not lose his game. Went to the field after lunching on pie at a bakery.

XVIII—Mrs. Nathaniel Lord, wealthy widow, living at the St. Regis.

XIX—Mrs. Ermentrude Taylor. (Nothing to add to what is already known.)

XX—Henry Abbott, Columbia student, good-hearted and reliable, but living in a world of his own to such an extent as to make him the butt of his fellow-students.

XXI-XXII—Young couple from Haverstraw. Just married. He a drug-clerk, she a farmer's daughter. Both regarded in their home town as harmless.

XXIII—James Correy, attendant. Bachelor, living with widowed mother. Fair record on the whole. Reprimanded once, not for negligence, but for some foolish act unbecoming his position. Thorough acquaintance with the Museum and its exhibits. A valuable man, well liked, notwithstanding the one lapse alluded to. At home and among his friends regarded as the best fellow going. A little free, perhaps, when unduly excited, but not given to drink and very fond of games. A member once of a club devoted to contests with foils and target-shooting. Always champion. Visits a certain young lady three times a week.

XXIV—Curator Jewett. A widower with two grandchildren—a daughter married to an Englishman and living in Ringold, Hants, and a son, owner of a large ranch in California. Lives, when in city, at Hotel Gorham. Known too well for any description of himself or character to be necessary here. If he has a fault, or rather a weakness, it is an extreme pride in his Museum and in his own conduct of its many affairs.

AS on the evening before, Mr. Gryce lingered longest over one name. He was still brooding anxiously over it when the telephone rang at his elbow and he

was called up from Headquarters. Cablegrams had been received from London and Paris in acknowledgment of those sent, and in both these cablegrams promises were made of a full examination into the antecedents of Madame Duclos and her companion Miss Willetts.

That was all. No further news regarding them from any quarter. Mr. Gryce hung up the receiver with a sigh.

"It is likely to be a long road full of unexpected turns and perilously near the precipice's edge," he muttered in weary comment to himself. "Nothing to start from but—"

Here Sweetwater walked in.

Mr. Gryce showed surprise. He had not expected to see the young man himself. Perhaps he was not quite ready to, for he seemed to shrink, for one brief instant, as from an unwelcome presence.

But the cheer which always entered with Sweetwater was contagious, and the old detective smiled as the newcomer approached, saying significantly:

"I had those dreams you spoke of last night, Mr. Gryce, and found them too weighty for the telephone."

"I see, I see! Sit down, Sweetwater, and tell me how they ran. I haven't as much confidence in my own dreams as I hope to have in yours. Speak up! Mention names, if you want to. No echo follows confidences uttered in this room."

"I know that; but for the present perhaps it will be best for me to follow your lead, and when I have to speak of a certain person, say X as you do. X, Mr. Gryce, is the man who for reasons we do not yet understand brought up the discarded bow from the cellar and stored it somewhere within reach on the floor above. X is also the man who for the same unknown reason robbed the quiver hanging in the southern gallery of one of its arrows and kept the same in hand or in hiding, till he could mate it with the bow. My dreams showed me this picture:

"A man with the sense of sport strongly in him, but otherwise active in business, correct in his dealings and respectable in private life, sees and frequently handles weapons of ancient and

modern make which rouse his interest and awaken the longing, common to such men, to test his skill in their use. Sometimes it is a sword, which he twirls vigorously in sly corners. Again, it is a bow calling for a yeoman's strength to pull. He is a man of sense and for a long time goes no further than the play I have just indicated. Perhaps he has no temptation to go further until one unfortunate day he comes upon an idle bow, rotting away in the cellar."

HERE Mr. Gryce looked sharply up—a proof of awakened interest, which Sweetwater did not heed. Possibly he was not expected to. At all events he continued rapidly:

"It was a fine, strong bow, a typical one from the plains. He took it up—examined it closely—noted a slight defect in it somewhere—and put it back. But he did not forget it. Before many days had passed, he goes down there again and brings it up and stands it on end in—where do you think, sir?—in the closet of the Curator's office!"

"How did you learn that?"

"From the woman who comes every day to wipe up the floors. I happened to think she might have something worth while to tell us and so I hunted her up—"

"Go on, boy. Another long mark in your favor."

"Thank you, sir. I'm relating a dream, you know. He stands it on end, then, in this closet into which nobody is supposed to go but the Curator and the scrubwoman, and there he leaves it, possibly as yet with no definite intention. How long it stood there I cannot say. It was well hidden, it seems, by something or other hanging over it. Nor am I altogether sure that it might not be standing there yet if he had not received a fresh impulse from seeing daily over his head a quiver full of arrows admirably fitted for that bow. Time has no place in dreams, or I might be able to state the day and the hour when he stood looking at the ring of keys lying on the Curator's desk, and struck with what it might do for him, singled out one which he placed in the keyhole of a door opening upon a certain

little iron staircase. He was alone, but he stopped to listen before turning that key. I can see him—can't you? His air is a guilty one; but it is the guilt of folly, not of premeditated crime. He wants a try at that bow and recognizes his weakness and laughs.

"But his longing holds, and running up the little staircase to a second door, he unlocks this also and after another moment of hesitation pulls it open. He has brought the bow with him, but he does not take it past the drapery hanging straight down before his eyes. He simply drops it in the doorway and leaves it there within easy reach from the gallery if ever his impulse should be strong enough to lead him to make an attempt at striking a feather from the Indian headdress on the other side of the court. You think him mad. So do I, but dreams are filled with that kind of madness; and when I see him shut the door upon this bow, and steal back without relocking it or the one below, I have no other plea than that to give in answer to your criticisms."

"I do not criticise; I listen, Sweetwater."

"You will criticise now. As Bunyan says in his 'Pilgrim's Progress:' 'I dreamed again!' This time I saw the Museum proper. It was filled with visitors. The morning of May twenty-second was a busy one, I am told, and a whole lot of people, singly and in groups, were continually passing up and down the marble steps and along the two galleries. Partaking of the feelings of the one whose odd impulses I am endeavoring to describe, I was very uneasy and very restless until these crowds had thinned and many of them vanished from the building. The hands of the clock were stealing toward twelve—the hour of greatest quiet and fewest visitors. As it reached the quarter mark, I saw what I was looking for, the man X reaching for one of those arrows hanging in the southern gallery, and slipping it inside his coat. —Did you speak, sir?"

NO, Mr. Gryce had not spoken; and Sweetwater, after an interval of uncertainty, went quietly on:

"As I saw both of his hands quite free



Holmes heard him say: "It cannot be, now. Circumstances have changed for me lately, and much as I regret it, I must ask you to be so good as to forgive me for giving up our plans." Then he offered her money,—an annuity,—but she cried out at that, saying it was love she wanted—money she could do without.

the next minute, I judge that something had been attached to the lining of that coat to hold the arrow by its feathered head. But this is a deduction rather than a fact."

He stopped abruptly. An exclamation, one of Mr. Gryce's very own, had left that gentleman's lips, and Sweetwater felt that he must pause if only for an instant, to enjoy his small triumph. But the delay was short.

"Go on," said Mr. Gryce; and Sweetwater obeyed, but in lowered tones, as though the vision he was describing were actually before his eyes.

"Next, I see a sweep of tapestry, and an eager, peering figure passing slowly across it. It is that of the lovelorn Travis watching his inamorata tripping up the marble staircase and turning at its top in the direction of the opposite gallery. His is a timid soul, and anxious as he is to watch her, he is not at all anxious to be caught doing so. So he slips behind the huge pedestal towering near him, thus causing the whole gallery to appear empty to the eyes of X, now entering it at the other end. This latter has come there with but one idea in his head—to shoot an arrow across the court at the mark I have mentioned. It may have been on a dare—sometimes I think it was; but shoot it he means to, before a fresh crowd collects.

"He already has, as you will remember, the arrow hidden somewhere about his person, and it is only a few steps to the edge of the tapestry behind which he has secreted the bow. If he takes a look opposite, it is at the moment when both Mrs. Taylor and Miss Willetts are screened from his view by one of the partitions separating the various sections. For unless he felt the way to be free for his arrow, he would never have proceeded to slip behind his chosen pedestal, secure the bow, pause to string it and crouch for his aim in such apparent confidence. For after he has left the open gallery and limited his outlook to what is visible beyond the loophole through which he intends to shoot, he can see—as we know from Mr. La Flèche—little more than the spot where the cap hangs and the one narrow line between. Unhappily, it was across this line the

young girl leaped just as the arrow left the bow. Don't you see it, sir? I do; and I see what follows, too."

"The escape of X?"

"Yes. The deed is done; he can never recall it. Whatever his horror or shame, nothing will ever restore the victim of his folly to life, while he himself has many days before him—days which would be ruined if his part in this tragedy were known. Shall he confess to it, then, or shall he fly (the way is so easy) and leave it to Fate to play his game—Fate, whose well-known kindness to fools would surely favor him? It does not take long for such thoughts to pass through a man's head, and before her dying cry had ceased to echo through those galleries, he is behind the tapestry and on his way toward the court. Beyond that, my dream does not go. How about yours, sir?"

"My dream was of a crime, not an accident. No man could be such a fool as you have made out this X of yours to be. Only an extraordinary purpose or some imperious necessity could drive a man to shoot an arrow across an open court with people passing hither and yon, even if he didn't see anyone in the gallery."

"By which you mean—"

"That he had already marked the approach of his victim and was ready with his weapon."

"You are undoubtedly right, and I only wish to say this: that the purpose in my relation was merely to show the method and manner of this shooting, leaving *you* to put on the emphasis of crime if you saw fit."

The gravity with which Mr. Gryce received this suggestion had the effect of slightly embarrassing Sweetwater. Yet he presently ventured to add after a moment of respectful waiting:

"Did you know that after I woke from my dream I had a moment's doubt as to its accuracy on one point? The bow was undoubtedly flung behind the curtain, but the man—"

HE paused abruptly. A morsel of clean white paper had just been pushed across the table under his eyes, and a peremptory voice was saying:



He stopped abruptly. "See what?" urged the Curator. "See *her*, that dead girl!—constantly—at night when my eyes still, so strangely and so unaccountably familiar! Do you feel the same?



are shut—in the daytime while I go about my affairs, here, there and everywhere. The young, young face! so white, so Did she remind you of anyone we know? I grow old trying to place her."

"Write me his name. I will do the same for you."

Sweetwater hesitated.

"I am very fond of the one of your own choosing," he smiled, "but if you insist—"

Mr. Gryce was already writing. Another moment, and the two slips were passed in exchange across the table—and a simultaneous exclamation left the lips of both men.

Each read a name he was unprepared to see. They had been following cross lines and not parallel ones; and it took minutes for them to adjust themselves.

He took advantage of her momentary absence to pull out that cuckoo-clock from the wall.

Then Mr. Gryce spoke:

"What led you into loading up Correy with an act which to accept as true would oblige us to deny every premise we have been at such pains to establish?"

"Because—and I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Gryce, since our conclusions are so different—I found it easier to attribute this deed of folly—or crime, if we can prove it such—to a man too young in years than to one old enough to know better."

"Very good; that is undoubtedly an excellent reason."

As this was said with an accent we will, for want of a better word, call *dry*, Sweetwater, hardy as he was, flushed to his ears. Any prick from Mr. Gryce went deep with him.

"Perhaps," he ventured, "you will give even less indulgence to any further excuse from me."

"I shall have to hear it first."

"Correy is a sport, an incorrigible one; it is his only weakness. He bets like an Englishman—not for the money, for the sums he risks are small, but for the love of it—the fun—the transient excitement. It might



be"—here Sweetwater's words came slowly and with shamefaced pauses—"that the shooting of that arrow—I believe I said something like this before—was the result of a dare."

A halt in the quick tattoo which Mr. Gryce's fingers were drumming out on his chair-arm. It was infinitesimal in length, but it gave Sweetwater courage to add:

"Then, I hear that he wishes to marry a rich girl and shrinks from proposing to her on account of his small salary."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Nothing that I can see now. I am only elaborating the meager report lying there under your hand. But I recognize my folly. You ordered me to dream, and I did so. Cannot we forget my unworthy vaporings and enter upon the consideration of what may prove more profitable?"

HERE he glanced down at the slip of paper he himself held—the slip which Mr. Gryce had handed him with a single word written on it, and that word a name.

"No," was the answer he received. "First explain to me how, with the facts all in mind, and your chart before your eyes, you reconciled Correy's position on the side staircase two minutes after the shooting, with your theory of a quick escape to the court by means of the door back of the tapestry? Haven't you hurried matters to get him so far in such a short space of time?"

"Mr. Gryce, I have heard you say yourself that this question of time has been, from the first, our greatest difficulty. Even with these three means of escape in our minds, it is difficult to see how it was possible for anyone to get from the gallery to the court in the minute or so elapsing between the cry of the dying girl and the appearance at her side of the man studying coins in the adjoining section."

"You are right. There was a delay somewhere, as we shall find later on. But granting this delay, a man would have to move fast to go the full length of the court from the Curator's room even in the time which this small delay might afford him. But perhaps you cut

this inextricable knot by locating Correy somewhere else than where he placed himself at the making of the chart."

"No, I cut it in another way. You remember my starting to tell you just now how, in my dissatisfaction with a certain portion of my dream, I refused to believe in the escape of my X by the way of the Curator's office. The tapestry was lifted, the bow flung behind, but the man stepped back instead of forward. An open flight along the gallery commended itself more to him than the doubtful one previously arranged for. If you will accept that for fact, which of course you will not, it is easy to see how Correy might have been somewhere on that staircase when the inspiration came to turn the appearance of flight into a show of his own innocence, by a quick rush back into the further gallery and a consequent loud-mouthed alarm. But I see that I am but getting deeper and deeper in the quagmire of a bad theory badly stated. I am forgetting—"

"Many things, Sweetwater. I will only mention a very simple one. The man who shot the arrow wore gloves. You wouldn't attribute any such extraordinary precaution as that to a fellow shooting an arrow across the court on a dare?"

"You wouldn't expect it, sir. But in going about the Museum that afternoon, I came upon Correy's coat hanging on its peg. In one of its pockets was a pair of kid gloves."

"You say the fellow is courting a rich girl," muttered Mr. Gryce. "Under these circumstances some show of vanity is excusable. Certainly he would not carry his folly so far as to put them on for the shooting match with which you credit him, unless there was criminal intent back of his folly—which, of course, would be as hard for you as for me to believe."

Sweetwater winced, but noting the kindly twinkle with which Mr. Gryce softened the bitterness of this lesson, he brightened again and listened with becoming patience as the old man went on to say:

"To discuss probabilities in connection with this other name seems futile

this morning. The ease with which one can twist the appearances of things to fit a preconceived theory, as exemplified by the effort you have just made, warns us to be chary of pushing one's idea too far without the firmest of bases to support it. If you find a man's coat showing somewhere on its lining evidences that there had once been sewed to it a loop of the exact dimensions of this one, I should consider it a much more telling clue to the personality of X than a pair of gloves in the pocket of a man who in all probability intends to finish up the day with a call on the girl he admires."

"I understand." Sweetwater was quite himself again. "But do you know that this is no easy task you are giving me, Mr. Gryce? Where a man has but two coats, or three at best, it might not be so hard, perhaps, to get at them. But some men have a dozen, and if I don't mistake—"

"Sweetwater, I meant to give you a task of no little difficulty. It will keep you out of mischief."

CHAPTER XIV

FOR the next three days the impatience of the public met with nothing but disappointment. The police were reticent,—far more reticent than usual,—and the papers, powerless to add to the facts already published, had little but conjectures to offer.

The hunt for Madame Duclos continued, joined in now by the general public. But for all the efforts made, aided by a careful search through her entire baggage, there was as little known concerning her as on the morning of her disappearance.

Nor did any better success follow the exhibition of the innocent body of the poor little victim at the Morgue. The mystery covering the whole affair seemed to be impenetrable, and the rush made on the Museum upon its first reopening to the public was such as to lead to its being closed again till some limit could be put upon the attendance.

And thus matters stood when one morning the country was startled, and the keenest interest aroused in this remarkable case, by an announcement re-

ceived from France to the effect that the young lady so unfortunately killed in one of the public buildings in New York City was, from the description sent, not the ward of the woman Antoinette Duclos, but her own child Barbe Duclos, and that the two were well known in St. Pierre sur Loire, where they had lived for many years in the relationship mentioned. At the convent where she was educated, she had been registered under the name of Duclos—also at the hotel where she and her mother had spent a few days before leaving for England. Though of pure French descent, the father being a Breton, they could not furnish her birth-certificate, as she had not been born in France. According to the records to be seen at the convent, the father, Achille Duclos, was a naturalized American whom her mother had met in England and married in France before going back to the States. So far as known, their story was a simple one, affording no reason, so far as could be learned, for any change of name on the part of the young woman, in her visit to America.

This was supplemented by a word from Scotland Yard, England, received a few hours after the other, to the effect that Madame Duclos and Miss Willets arrived at the Ritz from Dover, on the morning of May 16th, and left the next morning for Southampton. They spent the evening at the theater with friends who called for them in a public automobile. These people had not yet been found, but they had been advertised for and might yet show up. Nothing more could be learned of either of them.

Astonishing discovery — that two women known and recognized as mother and daughter in France should pass for unrelated companions on leaving that country to enter ours! What were we Americans to think of this, especially in the light of the tragic event which soon terminated this companionship?

That the French records, imperfect as they were, were to be relied upon as stating the truth as to the exact nature of the connection between these two, there could be no doubt. But granting this, what fresh complexities were thus brought into an affair already teeming



He had a smile on his face which broadened as he caught Sweetwater's sympathetic glance. "Fine day," he mumbled. "Are ye wantin' somethin' of me that ye're comin' this way?"

with incongruities—nay, absolute contradictions.

Madame Duclos' conduct, as shown toward her young charge, had seemed sufficiently strange and inconsistent when looked upon as that of governess or guardian. But for a mother, and a French mother at that, to allow a young and inexperienced girl to go alone to a strange museum on the very day of their arrival, and then, with or without knowledge of what had happened to her there, to efface herself by flight without promise of return, was inconceivable to anyone acquainted with the most ordinary of French conventions.

Some sinister secret, despite the seeming harmlessness of their lives, must hide behind such unnatural conduct! Was it one connected with, or entirely dissociated from, the tragedy which had terminated the poor child's existence? This was the great question. This was what gave new zest to the search for the dark-skinned Frenchwoman, with her drooping eyelid and hesitating walk, and led Sweetwater to whisper into Gryce's ear, as they stepped out that same day from Headquarters:

"No more nonsense now. We must find that woman or her dead body, before another twenty-four hours can elapse. With our fingers on that end of the string—"

"We will get hold of some family secret, but not of the immediate one which especially concerns us. Madame Duclos sent her daughter unattended to the Museum, but she did not direct the shaft which killed her. That was the work of our friend X. Let us then make sure that we fit the right man to this algebraic symbol, and trust to her testimony to convict him."

BY this time they had reached the taxi which was to convey Mr. Gryce home. But though Sweetwater lent his arm to help the old man in, he did it with such an air of hesitation that it caused the other to remark:

"You have not ended your argument. There is something more you want to say. What is it? Speak up."

"No, no. I am quite satisfied, so far

as the Duclos matter is concerned. It is only—would you mind stepping aside for a moment till I tell you a bit of gossip which has just come to my ears? Thank you, sir. Forbes is all right" (Forbes was the chauffeur), "but confidences are sacred and this thing was told me in confidence."

The humorous twist of his features as he said this quite transformed his very plain countenance. Mr. Gryce, noting it, began to stare at the first isolated object handy, which in this case happened to be the crooked end of his umbrella—a sign, to those who knew him well, of awakened interest.

"Well? Let's hear," he said.

"It doesn't sound like much; but it will probably be news to you, as it certainly was to me. It's this, Mr. Gryce: a certain gentleman we know has been contemplating matrimony; but since this accident happened at the Museum,—that is, within the last two days,—the engagement has been broken off."

"So! But I thought he had not got so far as an engagement. You mean young Correy—"

"No, Mr. Gryce, I do not. I mean—the other."

"The other! Well, that's worth listening to. Engaged, eh, and now all of a sudden free again? At whose instance, Sweetwater, his or hers? Did you hear that, as well as the rest?"

"Not exactly, but— It's quite a story, sir. I had it from his chauffeur and will tell it to you later if you are in a hurry to go home."

"Home! Come back with me into Headquarters. I've got to sleep to-night."

Sweetwater laughed, and together they retraced their steps.

"You see, sir," the young detective began as they drew their chairs together in an unoccupied corner, "you gave me a task the other day which called for the help of a friend—one at court, I mean, a fellow who not only knows the gentleman but has access to his person and his wardrobe. X does not keep a manservant; men of his intellectual type seldom do; but he does own a limousine and consequently employs a chauffeur.

Continued on page 596 of this issue.

Old Eat 'Em Alive

A love story in
the business world.

By
Crittenden
Marriott

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. F. JAMES

BELIEVE it or not, as you will, it is nevertheless a fact that Edward York—known as "Eat 'Em Alive York," from the fierceness of his physiognomy and the mildness of his manners—had a premonition of evil that morning as he gazed out of the window in the office of Wilton & Company, Limited. York had never had a premonition before in all his life—never, at any rate, since he had come from the home of two gentle maiden aunts to work for Wilton & Company; and in later days he was never able to remember what he had been premonitioning about on this particular morning, though he remembered the fact itself very distinctly.

It certainly was not about his position, for his tenancy of it was about as cop-

per-riveted as any in all New York. Nor was it about his work, for in the ten years he had been with the firm he had proved his worth again and again. Nor was it about sweethearts, for he had none, or about his relatives, for since his aunts had died, he had had none of these either. Nor, lastly, was it about his health, for he had that in such superfluity that he had forgotten that he had



Miss Noreen Donnelly was looking out and wishing that the fairy prince would arrive in an ambulance and take her away with him.

it at all; at thirty he looked far more like a college hick than he did like an anemic financial clerk. In fact, he had no reason whatever to expect evil from any source. Yet he did have the premonition; let it go at that. Later he thought he understood. Still later— But that is the story.

For evil came, more or less disguised, of course. Its source—its initial source, at all events, for Noreen Donnelly undoubtedly helped things along—lay in York's looks, which, as has just been said, sadly belied him. He was not at all like a college hick except in appearance. This may sound Hibernian, but it is true. His spirit did not match his face a little bit. He looked like a prize-fighter or a dog-fancier or a racing sport (or at least like the popular conception of these characters), but in reality he was a weak, lowly somebody whose maddest dissipation was to partake of a lemon-soda at a Y. M. C. A. picnic. Everybody was extremely polite to him at first meeting and everybody patronized him at about the fifth. Somewhere between the first and the fifth they began to revenge themselves for their earlier abasement by referring to him as "Old Eat 'Em Alive."

York did not mind it. York did not mind anything except being the center of attention—a horrid eventuality he had so far succeeded in sidestepping—or being placed at the mercy of a beautiful girl and compelled to talk to her for a whole half-hour without chance of escape.

Neither York's face nor his spirit was York's fault. He was born with the one and trained to the other. His aunts had brought him up in strict conformity with traditional maiden-aunt standards, and he had reached the age of thirty without having hit his man or kissed his woman. He was thoroughly convinced that both kissing and fighting were disgraceful, or at the best not "nice," and he had sedulously and successfully avoided both. Perhaps he did not deserve much credit for success in this, for his face warned men and forbade women.

But it is high time to get on with the story. York was in the midst of his premonition when Mr. Wilton—the Mr.

Wilton—pressed a button, and a buzzer on York's desk clamored forth a rattlesnake warning. York did not know it was a rattlesnake warning, of course. He did not know it was a warning at all. He thought it was merely a conventional call to duty. So he hurriedly dismissed his premonition just when he ought to have been thinking about it, and rushed on his fate—that is to say, he hurried to Mr. Wilton's room.

Mr. Wilton was in a very good humor that morning; he had just closed a traction deal (on terms worked out by York) that had added a quarter of a million to his already plethoric assets; and he was ready to hand out rewards. "York!" he said. "Luigi Caplice—the Banana King, you know—has got into financial difficulties over the war, and has applied to us to help him out. He has probably tried everybody else and has been turned down. Anyway, he's ready to snap at any bone we'll throw him. I suspect he's too far gone to be worth helping, but I guess you'd better slide over to Hoboken and see what he's got and what it's worth to him—and to us. Say as little as you can; just glare at him, and he'll offer things cheap. Take my office car! I sha'n't need it, and it'll impress Caplice. And—oh!—er—York, I've told the cashier to raise your salary five dollars a week. Your work in that traction deal was good—very good. And—you'd better hurry!"

SO York hurried. He was delighted to hurry. He was struggling to compel his tongue to thank Mr. Wilton for the five-dollar raise, and he was finding the effort exhausting.

When he had gone, Mr. Wilton sniffed. "Now, why in thunder didn't the Lord give that boy's face to somebody who had the nerve to use it?" he muttered. "If I had a face like that, it would be worth a million a month to me."

When Mr. Wilton ordered York to "slide," he did not expect to be obeyed literally. But he was. York went to Hoboken and interviewed Luigi Caplice, looked over his books with an expert eye and listened to what he had to say. He did not ask questions; he could not have asked a clear question to save

his life. Barely did he manage to introduce himself and explain his errand. As a matter of fact, he did not need to ask anything. When he found something in the books that required elucidation, he had only to stammer a word or two and then relapse into abashed silence, and his undershot jaw and man-killing eyes and general eat-'em-alive expression did the rest.

The burden of Caplice's woes was that the war, then only a few months old, had ruined him. He had bananas galore; all his future was tied up in banana plantations and banana freighters and in bananas themselves. And nobody would buy bananas! The country did not know that golden days lay ahead. War brides had not yet begun to wax fat. Exports had dropped away down. The stock exchange had only just opened. Cotton could not be given away. People were in the dumps, tightening their belts and doing without things. One of the things they did without was bananas—and bananas will keep for only a certain length of time. Therefore Caplice, with five excellent ships loaded with excellent fruit, and a number of excellent plantations ready to reload the ships, was facing ruin and despair.

All this and more York learned. Then, in an agony of embarrassment, he rose to take his leave. An idea—a wonderful idea—was working in his brain, but he had to be alone to shape it up. He could give Caplice no encouragement; he was too bashful; and besides, his business was to report to Mr. Wilton and not to Caplice.

York got himself out of Caplice's office at last. Once outside, he ran down the steps to the Wilton car and "slid"—poetic justice—on a banana peel and broke his ankle.

The chauffeur picked him up. The chauffeur did not know York intimately, but he admired him tremendously. A few months before, he had asked York whether he thought Jess Willard would win and had received in reply an embarrassed stutter that he had taken to be assent. He had staked his savings on it,—that is to say, on York's prognathous jaw,—and his subsequent reward had been great.

Therefore, when York fell, the chauffeur

picked him up tenderly, discovered that he was badly hurt, and frantically telephoned to Mr. Wilton.

When Wilton got the message, he swore. "Three weeks lost," he groaned. "It'll take the fellow at least three weeks to get well. And two big deals coming up! Confound it, what did I send him over to Caplice for? I could buy and sell Caplice for what this business will lose me. . . . Oh! Yes, of course! Rush York to the Gotrocks Hospital and tell them to take good care of him and charge it to our account."

Wilton did things nicely, as a rule. He did his clerks small favors that cost him nothing and won their devotion. Sending York to the Gotrocks Hospital was a case in point. Wilton was one of the founders of the hospital and was entitled to one bed all the time, free.

TEN minutes later Miss Noreen Donelly, nurse, was standing at a second-story window of the Gotrocks Hospital, looking out and wishing that the fairy prince would arrive in an ambulance and take her away with him—fairy princes usually arrive at hospitals in ambulances, and some of them take their nurses away with them. Noreen was beautiful, but she had reached an age when she was beginning to feel that the sooner she was carried away, the better—that is to say, she was twenty-five and in the zenith of her feminine charms, and she knew it—knew that the sparkle in her great blue eyes would dim, that the smoothness of her rose-tinted cheeks would crinkle and wrinkle and that the burnished gold of her hair would dull. It seemed almost providential, therefore, that she should be the next nurse available for duty when the shining imported Wilton car with its stately liveried chauffeur rolled up to the door of the Gotrocks Hospital, and Edward York, obviously young and oh! most obviously wealthy (else he would never have come to Gotrocks Hospital, especially in a car like that), was lifted out and helped indoors with solicitous care. Noreen's eyes gleamed with—er—probably with devotion to duty; let it go at that.

Edward York's eyes did not gleam. They glittered with anguish, both mental

and physical, at having fallen down on his job, both figuratively and literally. Later, when he beheld the face of the special nurse assigned to him and saw that it was exceeding fair, the cup of his anguish overflowed.

Just what Noreen's cup would have done had she just beheld Eat 'Em Alive York's face under other circumstances, it boots not to imagine. Seeing it as she did, she commented on it to her chum at the first opportunity. "Say, Mabel," she said, "take it from me, he's a winner. I don't wonder he's made his millions young. Nobody can look into that face of his and not see doggedness and genius and will-power and—"

"Help! Help!" broke in the chum.

"—and first aid to—er—somebody. . . . I've found out he aint married."

"How? D'you ask him?"

Noreen drew herself up. "Of course not," she countered. "'Twasn't necessary. Some of 'em you can't tell, of course; but him—oh, any baby would know, the minute she began to nurse him. They don't make married men as shy as he is—not these days, they don't. Believe me! With men you c'n see he'd be bold. But with women—good night!"

"Well, if he's as shy as all that, I don't see—"

"I do! Leave it to little Nora. All I got to do is to get him used to me. In a week he'll be eating right out of my hand. You'll see!"

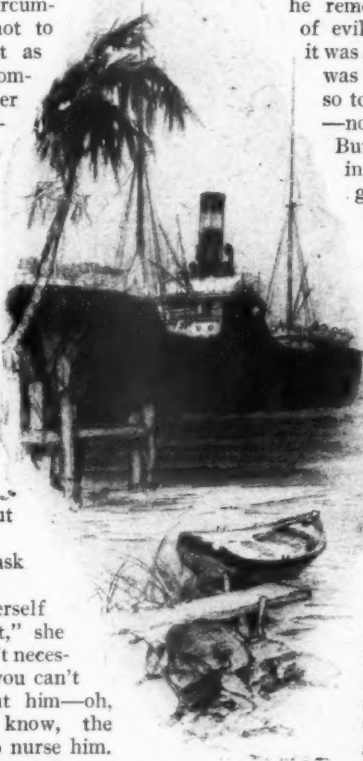
BUT all this came later. When York was first brought to the hospital he was thinking only of the Caplice prob-

lem—was thinking so vividly of it and its great money-making possibilities that he had almost forgotten his own pain. It was only after he had sworn the chauffeur to tell Mr. Wilton quickly and emphatically that he had information of great importance to impart that he thought of himself. And it was not until he saw Noreen that he remembered that premonition of evil and tried to recall what it was about. To break one's ankle was bad enough; but it was, so to speak, all in a day's work—not worth a premonition. But to be delivered, in splints, into the hands of a blue-eyed goddess with burnished hair and rose-petal cheeks was conspicuously not in a day's work—not in York's day's work, at all events. Desperately he longed for a male nurse, and desperately he strove to ask for one. But he only succeeded in frightening the interne who was fussing over his ankle. York looked pretty formidable when he was desperate.

"Can't—can't—can't—" he began; but he got no farther, for Noreen was looking at him (or at least at his ankle) calmly, attentively, impersonally, as a nurse should. How the mischief could any young man, let alone an extremely bashful young man, say right out loud that he wanted a male nurse when a calm, attentive, impersonal, beautiful

female nurse was looking at his ankle? Why, it might lose her her job if he asked such a thing. Besides, the doctor gave him no chance. He caught York's expression promptly and began to make excuses. He was a rather young interne.

"The chief surgeon will come to look at your ankle very soon," he answered



Caplice, with a dozen excellent ships loaded with excellent fruit, and a dozen excellent plantations ready to reload the ships, was facing ruin and despair.

hastily. "He'd be here now if it were in any way possible. But you needn't be alarmed. The injury isn't at all serious. You'll be out in a couple of weeks or so. Meanwhile we'll try to make you comfortable. If anything is amiss, we'll set it right."

Here was York's chance to rise superior to circumstances and declare airily that the only thing amiss was a blue-eyed miss. But of course he didn't do it.

So the doctor went on. "Miss Donelly will make you comfortable," he said.

York doubted it, but he could not have said so to save his life. So he only glared some more, glared so forbiddingly, in fact, that the doctor departed as hastily as he could to warn the senior surgeon that the patient in Room 15—he who had come in that gorgeous car—was so irritable that he must be somebody of importance.

That was what Noreen guessed too. But she knew better than to say it—better than to say anything, at the moment. With the well-known perspicacity of her sex, she had instantly diagnosed York's feeling toward women.

So she said nothing. She did not even look at York. She merely straightened things up and flitted gracefully in and out and about till York had time to get a little used to her. Then she brought the afternoon paper and paused in full view while she folded it so as to expose the financial page. "I guess you don't want to lose track of the market even if you are laid up," she said.

York looked up into her blue eyes, blushed, blinked—and clutched the paper as if it were a life-buoy. In doing so he touched Noreen's firm, cool, capable fingers, and blushed some more. "Th-thank you," he choked, and hurriedly interposed the printed page so as to cut off the effulgence of her smile.

Later, when she had flitted away, he watched her from behind the paper. She certainly did move gracefully, he thought. He wondered whether the hospital taught all nurses to walk gracefully, but he decided that all of them could not do it—not like this one, anyway. It was a pleasure to watch her. After all, his stay in the hospital mightn't be quite so miserable as he had

expected. Then she turned and caught his eyes full and smiled—Noreen was perfectly adorable when she smiled; and York sizzled and hastily resumed the study of finance.

That is, York pretended to resume it. Actually he forgot, not only finance but even the errand from the carrying out of which he had been so abruptly debarred; and he plunged into wild imaginings in which he dared a thousand deaths for the sake of a heroine who bore a most extraordinary resemblance to Noreen.

He came out of this state of mind very suddenly. He had remembered his message to Mr. Wilton. "Wi-will you 'phone and ask when Mr. Wilton is coming to see me about the—the—that business?" he stammered. "It's very important."

Noreen telephoned. Of course, she could not know what went on at the other end of the wire—could not know that Wilton had dismissed both York and Caplice from his mind and had started on a sudden holiday. She only heard the reply transmitted by a secretary who knew nothing about Caplice and his bananas. "Tell Mr. York he's not to worry about business. We'll look after everything till he gets back to take charge." This last was sarcastic. York never took charge of anything except his personal work. But Noreen could not know that, and she took the message literally and delivered it literally and with marvelously increased respect.

York was disappointed but relieved. His ankle was beginning to hurt a good deal, and he was finding it difficult to keep his mind on Caplice. He was not surprised at Mr. Wilton's lack of excitement, for he knew that his feudal chief did things in just that way and—oh, well, after all, if Wilton was satisfied, it was not up to him to worry.

So he devoted himself to considering his broken ankle and to watching Noreen—furtively. Between times he read the paper—not the financial column, however, but the shipping-news. He was figuring out the probable movements of Caplice's banana-carrying fleet.

This was the first day. The others were even more so.

NOREEN knew she had plenty of time; a broken ankle is not healed in a moment—and she played her cards carefully. First she had to determine whether she really wanted York. Noreen hoped for a prince, but she would not accept any old prince just because he could make a noise like a tin bank. Money counted with her, of course, as it does with everybody; but other things counted too. She had decided at once that she would "consider" York, but she permitted herself to go no further until she had found out what sort of prince he was.

Two days later the clerks in the Wilton offices sent York a bouquet of gorgeous roses—York was popular at the office. Noreen saw them and was properly impressed some more.

For two or three days longer she came and went quietly and unobtrusively, playing ministering angel, but being very careful not to be too blamed ministering—doing all she could to make her patient comfortable but refraining from attentions that she knew would make him uncomfortable; and taking especial pains not to frighten him. She wanted him to get thoroughly used to her; and besides, she knew that for two or three days after the first day his ankle would pain him a whole lot and that he would be in no mood for sentiment. She even expected him to be irritable during these days (especially in view of his eat-'em-alive face), and was prepared not to hold it against him if he were, and she was agreeably surprised to find him persistently good-natured—almost as persistently as he was tongue-tied.

"He certainly is one nice man," she confided to her chum at the close of the fifth day. "With that jaw, you'd think he'd bite your head off when the bones began to knit. But he hasn't cussed a single cuss. Did you notice what nice hair he's got? I could hardly keep from rumpling it to-day. Gee! I wonder what he'd have done if I had."

From which it may appear that Noreen had passed slightly beyond the mere "considering" stage.

So, for the matter of that, had York. For the first time in his life he was comfortable in the presence of a strange

young woman. Nay, more, for the first time in his life he had met a strange young woman whom he liked to have about. He had not known that there was such a young woman in all the wide world. It was very wonderful.

ON the fifth morning, when York reached for the paper that Noreen brought, his hand touched hers—or was it hers that touched his? But it really doesn't matter. What does matter was that an electric shock swept him from head to foot and that his fingers closed convulsively—it must have been convulsively—on hers. And once they had closed they clung. The truth was that York was too frightened to let go.

Noreen—well, perhaps Noreen felt an electric shock too. She protested, of course, but she did not draw her hand away. "Please, Mr. York!" she said. "Please! The doctor may come in any minute." This happened to be true; and the chance of being caught holding hands with her patient really did worry Noreen. Still, she made no effort to repossess herself of her fingers.

York did not speak. He couldn't. His Adam's apple prevented. But he did not let go, either. In fact, he moved his right hand over to assist his left not to let go.

Noreen flushed delicately. "Really! You mustn't, Mr. York!" she protested again. Then she tried to escape. That is, her brain telegraphed to her muscles to draw her hand away at once. But somehow her muscles refused to obey. They refused even to make a bluff at obeying. Noreen was really frightened when she discovered this. But that did not release her hand. "Please, Mr. York," she begged. "It isn't right for a man like you to—"

A step sounded in the corridor, and Noreen's muscles went on duty again with a rush. At the same instant York's muscles relaxed. By the time the head doctor and the head nurse and their train of satellites entered the room on inspection-tour, Noreen was standing well away from the hot-faced young man in the bed, awaiting inspection coolly, blandly and demurely.

When the visitors went, she went with them; and when she came back eventu-

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"Miss Donnelly will make you comfortable," said the doctor. York doubted it, but he could not have said so to save his life. So he only glared some more, glared so forbiddingly, in fact, that the doctor departed as hastily as he could to warn the senior surgeon that the patient in Room 15—he who had come in that gorgeous car—was so irritable that he must be somebody of importance.

ally,—she had to come back, of course,—she kept away from York as much as anybody who had to minister to a man almost hourly in one way or another could keep away.

York was wretched, of course. But he was proud too. He had taken the first step and had not fried in his own blushes. In fact, he had liked it. Moreover, he had a solid basis on which to build his imaginings now. And they did not seem quite so imaginative as they had seemed. He decided to rehearse the basis at the first opportunity.

Meanwhile he read the shipping-news.

But opportunity was slow in coming. Just why it was slow is Noreen's secret. Perhaps Noreen knew the efficacy of dangling the bait just out of reach of an eager fish; and perhaps—perhaps—Well, anyway, opportunity was slow in coming.

York waited for it for two weeks. Then he rebelled. From what previously unplumbed reservoir he drew his courage he never knew, but draw it from somewhere he did. "N-N-N-Noreen!" he stuttered. Oh, yes, he knew her name was Noreen. "No-Noreen! Come here!"

NOREEN stared, rather alarmed. Then she saw his face and came. She had to come, somehow. York's face had always been compelling unless he spoiled the effect by smiling.

This time he did not spoil it. "C-Come closer!" he ordered.

And Noreen came. She was trembling slightly.

York waited till she was within easy reach. Then, deliberately, bold as brass, he caught her and drew her down. When he let her go, she had said "Yes."

But of course this was not all of it. It was, in fact, just the beginning of it. They had to tell each other how they had begun to love and why they loved and how much they loved. And of course the talk finally had to work around to York's face. It just had to.

York brought it up himself.

"I can't understand," he murmured dazedly. "I can't understand. I never dreamed that any woman could care for a man as ugly as I am."

"Ugly? You?" Noreen almost screamed.

"Yes!" he stammered. "I look like a prize-fighter or an East Side tough. Oh! I know it. I've always known it. My jaw—"

But Noreen had caught her breath. "The idea!" she said. "The very idea! You're joking. You're not ugly. You're a *man*, not a counter-jumper. Your jaw shows it. Oh, yes it does! It's big and strong and fine and resolute. A girl would feel so safe with you. You could protect her. Nobody could look at you and doubt it. Why, it was that jaw—it must have been that jaw that has carried you to where you are and that has made Wilton & Company what it is."

YORK'S blood ran cold. He did not know just what niche in the Wilton & Company's aggregation Noreen supposed him to occupy, but it was abundantly evident that she supposed him to be more than a fifty-dollar-a-week clerk. The necessity of disavowal came strong upon him. "I—I am not so important as—as I would like to be," he stammered. The conclusion of his speech was not at all as he had intended. "Of course not," Noreen laughed gayly. "A man like you could not be satisfied. You'd trample anyone that got in your way. But you're a big man already—aren't you?"

York hesitated and was lost. "Oh, well!" he said. "I guess they'd miss me if I quit them. I have to put my O. K. on nearly all the big deals the firm puts through." It was quite true, though not exactly in the sense that York's words conveyed.

But it satisfied Noreen. She clapped her hands gayly. "I knew it," she cried. "Nobody could keep a man like you down. You'd force your way to the front, no matter who stood in your way. Don't abuse that splendid jaw of yours any more. It's the sort of jaw that kings and conquerors used to have and that millionaires have now. It's your jaw," she ended laughing, "that's going to get us our millions."

Again York caught his breath. "I—I haven't got even *one* million yet," he stammered truthfully. "But,"—a ring that surprised nobody more than York himself came into his voice,—"but I'm going to get it quick. I haven't worried

about money heretofore. So long as I had enough, I didn't care. But now it's different. So I'll go after it. It's easy enough to make money when you set your mind to it. And if *you* want it, I'll set my mind to it at once and—"

Noreen gave a little scream. "Oh! Please don't think I'm mercenary," she begged. "It's only that I lived in a three-room flat all my life till I came here, and I'm tired of it. You understand, don't you? But no, of course you don't understand. How could you—you who've had everything you wanted for the mere asking? Yes, I want money. But I'm not mercenary. I'd be willing to—to—"

"Well! You won't have to," York declared positively. "All that sort of thing is over for you—or will be soon. I'll set about accumulating those millions the minute I get out of here, and in a month or two we'll get married and—"

York did not intend to deceive. He believed every word he said. For the first time in his life he felt confidence in himself.

AFTER this, York was in a fever to be gone from the hospital. He had to set about making that million. Moreover, he saw his way to making it. He had seen no announcement in the papers of Caplice's failure. If he was right in supposing that the Banana King was still hanging to his throne, and if no one else had discovered and snapped up the chance that he had discovered, he was sure that he could make a lot of money both for the Wiltons and for himself. He was sure that he had only to explain things to Mr. Wilton to get his indorsement. He was very grateful to Mr. Wilton for giving him all the wonderful hospital treatment (including Noreen) that he had received, and he would be very glad (besides being in duty bound) to add a small fortune to the firm's profits. But he would also be glad to lay the foundation for a large fortune for himself. And this time he resolved to insist on having his share.

The doctors did not want him to go to the office. They insisted that he would run serious risks if he did so. But they found him determined, and they consented at last, reluctantly, on condition

that he would go in an auto, would not take a single step that he could avoid and would return to the hospital as quickly as possible.

York promised willingly. He would have promised anything to get away.

So, the morning after he had extracted Noreen's promise, he went to Wilton & Company's offices. But he did not go in his old unobtrusive fashion. He strode in—no, he did not stride; a man with his ankle still in a cast and with a crutch under one arm could not really stride. But he gave the suggestion of striding. He did not blush and swallow his Adam's apple and fumble with his fingers when the other clerks crowded up to welcome him. Instead, he met them bluffly, answered their congratulations easily and passed in to Mr. Wilton's private office with an assurance that left everybody staring. The office-boy voiced the general dazed feeling when he blurted out: "Gee! Did old Eat 'Em Alive hurt his head *too*?"

Meanwhile York had entered Wilton's office with a merely formal "Excuse me!" A month before he would not have dreamed of entering this holy of holies unbidden, and even if bidden would have entered it tongue-tied and abashed. But now he went in boldly.

Wilton, however, was too glad to see him to take offense. Instead, he beamed. "Why! Good morning, York!" he exclaimed. "I didn't expect you so soon, though. I was just wishing you were here. Are you ready for work? Sit down! I've got something for you to take up right away. The Osgood Company is—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Wilton," interrupted York. "I haven't reported about the Caplice matter yet. There's a big chance there, and—"

"Caplice? Oh! nothing doing in that line, York. No time to bother with small fry now. The Osgood Company—"

York saw his air-castles tottering. "But Mr. Wilton," he protested desperately, "Caplice isn't small fry. He's big. There's a fortune—"

Mr. Wilton frowned perceptibly. He was not used to being interrupted by his subordinates. It occurred to him that he had been too effusive in his welcoming. "Nothing doing," he repeated sharply.

"Caplice is off the slate for good and all. Understand that, Mr. York."

York blinked. "Very well, Mr. Wilton," he acceded miserably. Then abruptly he remembered Noreen, and something within him took control. Forward he leaned, thrust out his prognathous jaw and spoke in a tone such as no one had ever heard him use before. "Pardon me," he said, "but I think I'd better explain my position before I hear any new business. I've decided that I must make more money—a great deal more money. For the present I'll be satisfied with a salary of five thousand dollars a year and a percentage on the business I put through. Later I'll have to insist on being taken into the firm. I've been worth five thousand dollars a year in the past, and I'll be worth a lot more in the future. Do I get it?"

Mr. Wilton's eyes narrowed. His thoughts took the same direction as had the office-boy's. "I didn't know you had hurt your head *too*, Mr. York," he said. "Your demands are simply insane and cannot be considered. Your services are valuable yet! But they are not so valuable as you think. I'm afraid—" Mr. Wilton stopped; for the first time he realized how undershot York's jaw really was. "I might consider raising you ten dollars a week," he suggested.

"Ten dollars a week would be of no use to me, Mr. Wilton. I need big money. Five thousand and commissions is the best I can consider. That's final."

"Oh, very well!" Mr. Wilton considered it beneath his dignity to discuss the matter further. "You needn't go to work again. The cashier will pay you two weeks' salary. If you change your mind later, we'll be glad to reemploy you—if we have a vacancy. Good morning!"

YORK went away, head in air. He had cast the die, and it remained to read the result. He had given up his post and had no prospect of another—and he had considerably less than five hundred in the world. A month before, such a condition would have appalled him. But it did so no longer. He had four hundred odd dollars in tangible assets—yes; but he had an immense

stock of intangible assets that he had never had before. He counted them as he went: item, one girl whom he wasn't afraid of; item, one prize-fighter face; item, one stock of soaring self-confidence. These were enough to make any man's fortune.

York got into his taxi and went back to the Gotrocks Hospital. He did not go to stay. He went to see Noreen. He had decided to confess to her.

"Noreen," he planned to say, "I have deceived you. I am not a member of the Wilton firm. I never was more than a fifty-dollar clerk, and now I am not even that. I am not rich. I have about four hundred dollars to my name. You will be perfectly justified if you throw me over. But if you'll trust me and give me a year's grace, I'll make a million and more for you. Will you trust me, Noreen?"

That was what he planned to say. What he did say was very different. When he saw Noreen, he was so struck with her beauty (he had not seen her for at least two hours) that he deferred his speech in favor of certain preliminaries that seemed indispensable. And when these had been concluded, she took the words away from him.

"Did you get the message from Mr. Caplice?" she questioned.

"Caplice?" York was stunned. He had told Noreen nothing of Caplice.

"Yes! Didn't you get it? He called up an hour ago. He had just learned of your accident and he seemed very anxious to reach you. When I told him you had gone out, he wanted to know whether you had started to see him. . . . What's the matter?"

The expression in York's eyes justified the question. He was staring holes in the air.

Slowly his face relaxed. "I was listening for our million," he answered grimly. "I thought I heard it clinking down the street. If you'll help me, I'll get it right away."

"Me help you? Me? Of course I'll help you. But what can I do?" Noreen's voice was eager.

"You can sprinkle salt on the million's tail." York was getting his metaphors horribly mixed, but something must be allowed to his condition. "Go



to the telephone and call up Luigi Caplice and say that Wilton & Company wants to speak to me."

"Speak to you? What on earth—"

"They'll say that I'm not there. Show vexation—say it's important, and ask them to tell me to call the office up the minute I arrive. Show anxiety. Do you understand?"

Noreen laughed. "Not at all!" she said. "But I can obey orders. That's what I've been taught to do."

"Good!" York looked at his watch. "I'm going to start for Caplice's now," he said. "I'll take thirty minutes to go. In fifteen minutes call up again, say you know I've started for their office and repeat that Wilton & Company wants to speak to me the moment I get there."

"Yes!"

"Ten minutes later call up a third time. When they say I haven't come, ask them to tell me to sign no agreement till I have talked to the office."

"And then?"

"That's all! That's salt on the tail of that million. If you sprinkle it well I think I'll be able to catch the bird in spite of its wings."

Noreen got up. "Come and watch me take the salt-shaker from the hook," she invited.

HALF an hour later York drove up to the office of Caplice Brothers in the most expensive-looking automobile he could hire. If he had looked up at the window, he might have seen Luigi Caplice watching for him. But he did not look up. He did not need to look up. He knew Caplice would be there.

And he was very certain that no one would mention Noreen's telephone-calls to him.

"I got your message, Mr. Caplice," he growled in his most forbidding manner. "Wilton & Company had decided to go no further in your matter, but your

message was so urgent that I decided to come to see you. Have you anything to add to your former statement?"

Luigi Caplice shook his head smilingly. If Wilton & Company were as anxious to stop action by their representative as their efforts to reach him indicated, they were very anxious indeed. Their last message, "Sign no agreement—" showed why. Therefore it was up to Caplice to get their representative to sign the agreement (on which they had evidently agreed) before they did reach him. Therefore it was his cue to smile confidently. "No, signore," he said, "I have nothing of the new. I have wish only to give you the chance to make much money. I have wait these so many weeks for you. Now I can wait no longer. If you want to buy, you must buy to-day. The business is good—"

"The business is rotten; and you are bankrupt. You can't last a week longer without help, and you know it. Even with abundant capital your prospects would be doubtful. Still, I'll make you a proposition. I'll pay you two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for your whole business, plantations, ships, stock on hand—everything."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand? *Dio, signore!* A year ago I have refused eight hundred thousand. But this war—"

York's jaw clamped down. His shoulders humped themselves. Deliberately he got up. "Exactly," he said. "This war. Two hundred and fifty thousand is my last word."

Caplice's confidence melted. "*Dio!*" he groaned. "Take it for four hundred thousand."

"No!"

"Three hundred thousand. I can do no better. It is robbery!"

York seemed to hesitate. "May I telephone the office?" he asked.

Caplice groaned. He remembered the latest instructions that had been 'phoned by Noreen: "Sign no agreement till—" "All right," he said. "You may have it at two hundred and fifty dollars—cash."

York shook his head. "Cash in ten days," he amended. "I'll pay two hundred and fifty dollars to bind the bargain. Take it or leave it."

Caplice took it. He took it with many groans, but he took it. While he hesitated, York's heart was in his mouth, though Caplice never could have guessed it by the expression of his face.

York drew up the necessary papers, which were simple, and handed over a check for two hundred and fifty dollars, which left hardly a hundred dollars to his credit in the bank. Then he drove away in his hired car.

THE hour was late,—it was after five o'clock,—but York did not stop for that. He knew just what he had to do, and was confident of his ability to do it speedily. He drove straight to the offices of the Cisatlantic Steamship Company, and sent in his card. It bore "Wilton & Company" in one corner.

His own name, he knew, was unknown, but he guessed that the name of the firm would gain him immediate admittance. And so it did.

The general manager beamed at him, fingering the card the while. "You are from Wilton & Company?" he questioned.

York shook his head. "No!" he said. "I have been connected with Wilton & Company for ten years, but I am calling on personal business."

"Oh!" The general manager's face fell. York, individual, was very different from York, of Wilton & Company. He looked at the card again. "Well! Mr. York, what can I do for you?" he questioned.

"Nothing. I came to do something for you. What will you give me for five eight- to ten-knot steamers four or five years old with cargo capacities of one to two thousand tons each, in good condition, deliverable at any American port within ten days?"

"Give for them? Give for them?" The general manager stood up. "If you've got five eight-knot steamers that can cross the Atlantic as they stand, we'll give you just double what they cost when they were built."

"Double?" York laughed, but his jaw looked ugly. "My dear sir," he said, "I came to talk business. You know and I know that ships will be worth their weight in gold in less than three months—and none obtainable at that. I really

ought not to sell now. But I don't want to make all the money. I'm willing to let other folks have a share. So I'll take three times the cost price."

The general manager looked at York's face and hesitated. "What ships are they?" he asked.

"The banana fleet of Caplice & Company," returned York evenly. "You know them?"

"Caplice! By Jove!" The manager bit his lip. He realized that he had overlooked a chance. "Yes! I know them," he answered. "All right, Mr. York. I'll have to consult the president," he said. "But it's a matter of form. We'll buy your ships, Mr. York."

NEXT morning, after the formalities of his deal had all been executed, York called at the office of Wilton & Company.

Mr. Wilton, guessing that his erstwhile clerk had repented of his haste and was properly humbled, kept him waiting for a while in order to let the lesson sink in and then gave orders to admit him. "Well, York," he said cheerfully (for he understood York's value as a financial clerk), "want to come back to work?"

York laughed. "Not quite," he said. "I merely called to renew my offer of yesterday—five thousand a year, a percentage and eventual admission to the firm."

Wilton started up. "This effrontery must cease," he thundered. "This—"

"One moment, please. I've made a third of a million since yesterday. If you had listened to me when I tried to tell you about Caplice, you would have made it, and I'd have had only a percentage. I'd like to explain."

Mr. Wilton sat down. A third of a million was considerable, even to Wilton & Company. "Go on," he said.

York went on. "Caplice can't think in more than one direction," he finished. "All he knows is bananas. He had to keep his ships or he couldn't move his bananas, and it never entered his head that he could let his bananas rot this year and make a fortune by turning his ships into general freighters. The rise in transatlantic freights meant nothing to him. It means nothing to most people just yet, but it'll mean a whole lot to everybody in a month more. Caplice would have gone bankrupt before he'd have thought of selling his ships separately. That's why I had to buy his whole business, banana plantations and all. I sold the ships within the hour for several times what I had paid for everything; and I've got the banana plantations left. I suppose they'll be nearly ruined by neglect before I can do anything with them, but—I should worry. Still, on the whole, I'd like to come back to Wilton & Company—as a member of the firm, of course. I can afford to buy in now."

Mr. Wilton did not hesitate. He possessed the rare virtue of knowing when to reverse himself. "I've always said that you would be worth a million to the firm if you ever found your nerve, York," he said. "You evidently have found it now. Besides, we need men who can see ahead. Therefore"—Mr. Wilton held out his hand—"come to lunch with me and let's talk over details."

But York shook his head. "Sorry," he said, "but I can't to-day. I'll be very busy to-day. I'm to be married this afternoon. But I'll see you at one to-morrow."

"A Deal in Friendship"

THINK of the eight most interesting men in the United States, men you'd like to know personally, intimately—Wilson, Roosevelt, Henry Ford, J. Pierpont Morgan, Billy Sunday, Daniel Willard, George M. Cohan, Thomas A. Edison! One of these would surely be the double of John Greer. For Greer is a fascinating and important person; and the dramatic story of his faith in a woman who deserved it and in a man who did not, and of his unique business adventure—this story is engrossing indeed. You may know John Greer—intimately, delightfully—in that extraordinary story, "A Deal in Friendship," by Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg, in the August Red Book, on sale July 23rd.

No Man With

By Opie Read

Author of "The Jucklins," etc.

ILLUSTRATED
BY WILLIAM
OBERHARDT



"Much obliged for your coolness, ma'am, but I could drill into a steel vault easier than to find a woman's pocket. You ought to

know that, if you've ever had a father or a brother. Now, don't stir. Our profession is tenderer than law or medicine, when the party has sense enough to follow advice. . . . I never shot a woman in my life, and never choked but three."

"I'd rather be shot than have your brutal hands about my throat," she said.

"Natural enough, ma'am. Midnight chokers don't wear soft gloves, you know. S'ciety has improved 'em a good deal, fed 'em on chicken to get 'em to listen to long speeches, but it still hangs back on buyin' 'em silk mitts."

"Are all murderers talkative?" she asked, feeling proud of herself.

"Come, ma'am, give a feller some little credit. I aint as bad as some of 'em. I show heart when they let me."

The boring eye shifted, and now Cere-
lia was in a darkness that seemed to
press, like two black fingers, down upon
her eyes. She heard the burglar fum-

CERELIA awoke with the boring light of a flash-lamp full in her face. A deep voice came out of blackness:

"Don't move, and I'll not hurt you."

She lay perfectly quiet. Having come to her senses with a painful start, she now wondered why she was not more frightened.

"Where are your jewels?"

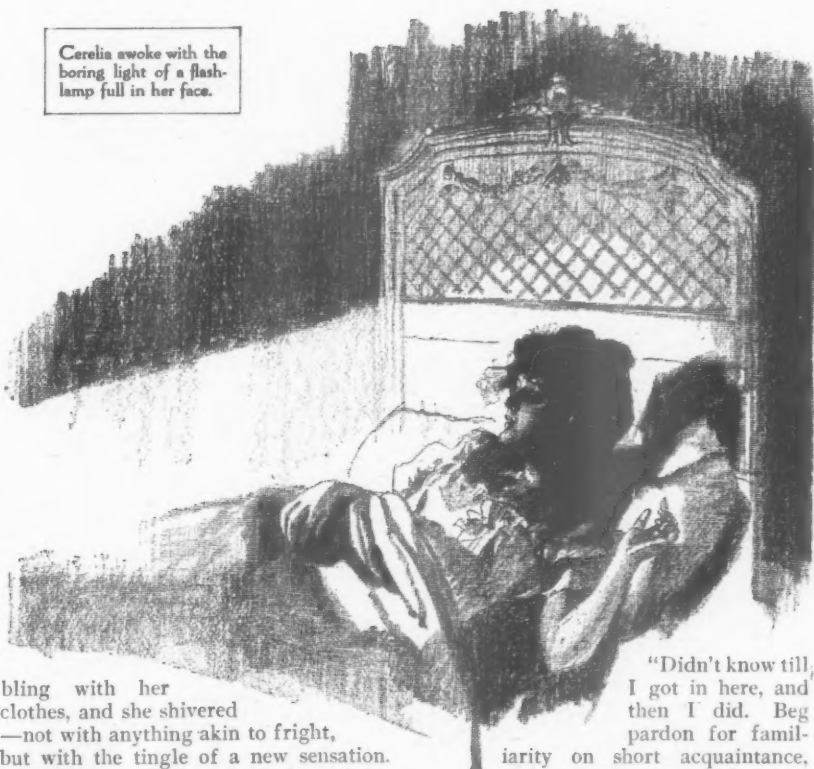
"Top drawer of the dresser, right-hand side."

"The keys?"

"In the pocket of my dress on a chair by the window. Don't muss up everything."

A Soul

Carelia awoke with the boring light of a flash-lamp full in her face.



bling with her clothes, and she shivered—not with anything akin to fright, but with the tingle of a new sensation. She heard the key at the lock, and she laughed inwardly to think that at this moment she should recall an amusing incident, the foolish look of a sapsucker pecking at the metal semblance of a tree. She heard the burglar rummaging in the drawer. Again the light flashed in her face.

"I must thank you for a pocket that I could find and the diamond necklace you wore at the opera to-night!"

"You impudent scoundrel!"

"I take issue with you, ma'am, as to the scoundrel, but as to bein' impudent, I rather take sides with you, for I gazed at you through a glass. I was in the gallery. I generally roost high when business has been slack; but to-morrow I may sit in the box opposite you."

"How do you know I am the same woman you gazed at?"

"Didn't know till I got in here, and then I did. Beg pardon for familiarity on short acquaintance, ma'am, but no man with a soul could ever forget your face."

"You are a flatterer as well as a thief."

"Putty much the same thing, ma'am. A thief steals your diamonds, and a flatterer sneaks your good opinion."

"Why, what sort of talk is this?"

And she moved as if to arise upon her elbow, but in a circling threat the light whirled about her face, and his voice commanded her to lie still. She obeyed, murmuring against the hard exaction of his rule, and then explained that she had forgotten his instructions. In his voice there was a note humorous and yet sympathetic, as he told her that a burglar's advice, tending as it did toward the preservation of good health, should be strictly followed. She wished that she might see his face—the situation was becoming so strangely romantic; and he

answered that while not ashamed of his countenance, he did not care to have it too well advertised.

"Why are you a robber?" she asked.

"Had that question asked me once before, by an old girl in a nightcap. And if I had followed up my acquaintance with her, I guess she might have adopted me as her son; but she wanted to pray for me, and I hardly ever have time for family prayers."

"But answer my question: why are you a robber?"

"The human family is a household of robbers, and I must live among my brothers."

"And steal your sister's diamonds?"

"My sister did not earn her diamonds. They figured in many an oppressive and dishonest deal before they ever came to her."

"Oh, I am robbed by a socialist who justifies his crime."

"No," he replied quickly, "by a philosopher, by a man who failed at medicine, law and journalism; and when a man fails at these, he looks with a forgiving eye upon any crime he may fancy himself forced to commit."

Was there ever before offered so good a chance for a quick bit of moral argument?

"No man is forced to commit a crime; but a criminal instinct may be intelligent and palliate its own infirmity."

Softly the burglar chuckled. "You can use that little speech at the next meeting of the reform-club."

"How do you know I belong to a reform-club?"

"By that intelligent criminal instinct you spoke about. It used to be that most of the women reformers were unattractive, but now the handsome ones come a-running. And why so? Because the intelligent woman is bored by the average man, telling what food agrees with him and what doesn't. Back through the ages her mind unconsciously flies to the time when up came the steel-coated robber on horseback and grabbed her. There's a lot of tiger in her nature, and she admires strength even if it is sometimes a little brutal. In the off-color man there is at least a smack of originality, and it's the more enjoyable because she

deplores it. Answer me a question: does the average man bore you?"

"Yes, even the man above the average."

"Good enough! But you see I give you the opportunity to interest yourself with looking into a criminal's mind. But I beg your pardon. I am robbing you of something more precious than jewels, your morning's beauty-sleep."

"Are you going?"

"Yes, please."

"Isn't it abominable that I should really enjoy talking to you?"

"A proof of what I have just said, fair lady. You would like to reform me."

"Yes, I would."

"And you have already come nearer to it than my own remnant of conscience or the severity of the law. When my pals have fought over women, I have laughed. Now I understand. No man with a soul—"

"I forbid you to say that again."

He bowed to her with his light.

"Good-by, fair lady."

For a long time Cerelia lay reproaching herself for having talked so freely with a burglar. He was intelligent, interesting, yes; but he was a thief and not the less an outlaw because he had called himself a philosopher. Any scoundrel could do that. And her necklace, so much admired! She detested the thought of a diamond notoriety, at police headquarters and in the newspapers. . . . The drowse of dawn came upon her. She heard the burglar's voice: "No man with a soul could ever forget your face."

She awoke, and there at the foot of the bed lay her necklace, dazzling in the sun.

AMBROSE DELT, millionaire manufacturer of heating-appliances, was so much an individual as to invite the appellation of "crank." His daughter Cerelia was called a "character." On the part of a young woman it requires superior grace and a beauty-prize winner's good looks to offset the social stigma of such an indictment. But against her the indictment could not stand. She wore the grace of unconscious art, the social reporters said; and her beauty, cast in an imperious mold, was wont to intimidate close intimacy



"Very well, then, bring out a ragged man, and I'll marry him," she answered. It was here that her father strove to show that he was hurt. "Now, there's no need of a man's being ragged. Cashmere has covered more virtue than rags ever did. Sterling worth is the thing, I tell you. But how do you treat worth? With a sort of patronizing indifference."

while it aroused admiration. The burglar was right. No man with a soul could ever forget her face.

Often had her father said to her: "Now, it doesn't make any difference how much money a young woman may have, or how much she may be celebrated as an actress, a singer, or how much her beauty may have captivated kings and courts—unless she marries, her life is a failure."

"But you wouldn't want me to marry a man I didn't love, would you?" she replied on one occasion.

"Surely not; but my dear, love—I mean what you might call 'book-love'—why, that belongs to other days. It hasn't kept up with the procession, so to speak. The love that heaved up its soul is all right on the stage, and filmed out in the mighty forest of a ten-acre lot; but it is out of date in actual life. What you want these days is a sort of companionship-love, you know."

"I think I understand. You expect me to marry for money or position."

It was here that old Ambrose always cleared his throat of a reserve deposit of foundry-dust.

"Not money and not position, my daughter, but worth, sterling worth—character, more to be prized than gold." The word *gold* winced him a bit, but proud of the sacrifice to virtue, he smiled at his own Galilean abnegation.

"Very well, then, bring out a ragged man, and I'll marry him," she answered.

It was here that her father strove to show that he was hurt. "Now, there's no need of a man's being ragged. Cashmere has covered more virtue than rags ever did. Sterling worth is the thing, I tell you. But how do you treat worth? With a sort of patronizing indifference. I have brought numerous worthy men out to the house, to say nothing of those you have met in society, and how have you treated them? There was Mr. Haines, for instance, and—"

"A prig," was her interrupting comment.

"The Reverend Mr. Starkney, another—"

"A sewing-circle prude."

"To say nothing of Colonel Bimlic—"

"A military fop."

"Only to have you look them over and with your lack of interest, dismiss them. Well, I have done all that a father could."

ON her way down to breakfast, Cerelia was resolved to prepare for the old gentleman a whimsical recital of a visit from a man more interesting than any he had ever introduced, but when the time came, her morning's brief flirtation with the head of the house in the library, the stream of her courage trickled thin, ceased to flow; and in her heart she felt that the burglar's visit, instead of amusing, was sad.

When Old Ambrose had trotted out to his car, to swift his way to business, Cerelia thought to tell her mother, make a sympathy of it. Yes, she would do that. Mrs. Delt was a compliant little creature; and so easily in accord with the opinions of her husband was she that people said: "How well mated they are! What a devoted couple!" She was a pleasant shadow; and her coming and going about the house seemed but the luminous tapping of slippers on the hardwood floor. How easy it would be to relieve the burglar's visit of fright and to make a pathetic story of it! Tears would gather in the mother's eyes, and she would sigh and say: "Oh, what a romantic adventure!"

But when the slippers had tapped into the girl's room, there was another sudden dry-up of the trickling stream; and all that came of it was a commonplace talk. Her adventure had merged into a secret, sacredly to be kept.

Now she scanned the newspapers, searching for robberies. A lone bandit held up a train near the city, and she mused: "It was he." An express-office was robbed of a large sum, and she said: "He will now sit in a box at the opera." During all this time she believed, warming with a sense of pride, that with an opportunity to talk to him, she could have prevented these crimes. From a book idly taken up, a sentence leaped out and thrilled her: "A man is reformed not by moral force but by sentiment."

Among several letters brought one morning to the breakfast-table there was

one that blushed her. She read the first few lines and slipped the missive under her plate. This morning her library-flirtation with her father was short. He noticed it, something never before apparent, her anxiety to get away.

"Hey, what's your rush?"

"Am I rushed? I didn't know it. Beautiful day!"

"What, with all this wind and rain?"

"Oh, it is raining. I hadn't noticed it. Must you be going?"

In her room she curtained out the murky light of day and turned on a softly shaded bulb, an electric rose. His letter! How firm was the writing! What strength of character! His bold strokes beat blushes on her cheeks. The writer began:

You have robbed me of my trade. You have sent me to bruise my hands with rough labor. Along with ignorance and brutality I am loading ships. To-day I looked at my blood and I said: "She has shed it." You must have read about the express-robbery. I planned it a month ago, but when the time for action came, I shrank back from it. I had talked with you.

She thought that she heard the tapping of slippers, and she hid the letter in her bosom, but so hard and fast did it beat blushes that she snatched it out. . . . A false alarm! She read, beginning again at the first word. Then she came upon this:

Can a change of heart change the countenance? A copper who once pinched me and who was looking for me to jug me again, didn't know me to-day when I met him face to face. Last night one of my former pals asked me in to have a bowl. "Much obliged," I said, "but I don't drink." He looked at me. "Nobody would ever have thought you would change soft," he said. But I am not soft. A ruffian insulted me, and I knocked him down. That doesn't look soft, does it? It is only when it comes to drinking or anything in my old line that I am soft.

Now, I must be bolder than I have ever been, bolder than when I held up a millionaire in his office some time ago. It is this: I must meet you. It seems that the life of my soul depends on it. You cannot make me more honest than I am determined to be, and yet I feel that I need your strength. Remember that I am now but a child groping my way in the dark, feeling about to keep from falling

over something. Ahead of me I see a light. You carry it. Don't carry it so swiftly that I can't follow.

Besides, I have another object in meeting you. Although I have failed so repeatedly, I feel that I am fitted for something better than rolling barrels. Help me. My real name is Boyd Thatcher, but if you deign to write, a letter addressed to Sam Parker, 51 Gobwitch Place, will reach me. I must meet you in your own home. I want to feel its purifying influence. Would you believe it? I tremble as I read over these last lines. No man with a soul—

She felt that she ought not to answer except to refuse him. After long contemplation and a dramatic appeal to her own strength of character, she wrote that to grant his request to see her and in her own home was unfortunately impossible. She more than hinted that it was preposterous, thus to distort her attitude toward him. She wrote:

If I have been of real moral service to you, I am thankful. Even the most idle and thoughtless are flattered to feel that they may have accomplished some little good in the world. Your reformation, I must say, is thus far quite remarkable. But I can't recall anything I said during our brief "visit" to cause it. As to your perseverance in that line, read uplifting books, and—

How flat this looked! But what else could she say? Evidently it was nothing that she had said, but her face, forgotten of no man with a soul, that had turned his hands from evil to honest work. So pleasing was this thought that she put aside her "strength of character" and gave herself over to a season of warm and agreeable musing. Then, tearing up what she had written, she wrote:

If you come next Wednesday evening at eight o'clock, I shall see you.

FOR three days she was arraigned at the bar of her judgment, on trial for weakness. She had made an appointment to receive as a guest a former burglar, perhaps an ex-convict. But might she not thereby prevent a hundred crimes? And the adventure, the novelty of it, how thrilling! Surely these arguments ought to acquit her. They did.

Sinking her voice low with moral

weight, she would be brief and simple with him. She would look him in the eye and tell him that he had a soul to save. No, that wouldn't do. It had too much the air of the street-corner, in the gathering dusk, the banner spread, the bass-drum beating.

In a great damask room she sat, waiting for him. Surely the anticipated coming of a duke would not so much have flustered her.

He was announced. She statted herself, slowly raising her eyes. Then she forgot what she had intended to say. She held out her hand. He took it in his own—the hard and calloused hand of a laborer. She bade him sit down; and now for the first time she put aside her excitement and saw him clearly. She had expected a short, wire beard. His face was as clean as razor could render it. She had thought that his countenance must serve as telltale of his disorderly life, but his features revealed a nature frank and honest. And if that reflection of honesty were new, she had inspired it. His clothes were old, but neat; and what astonished her most, he was handsome.

"I thank you, Miss Delt, for the opportunity to—"

"Oh, not at all, Mr.—"

"Thatcher," he supplied her.

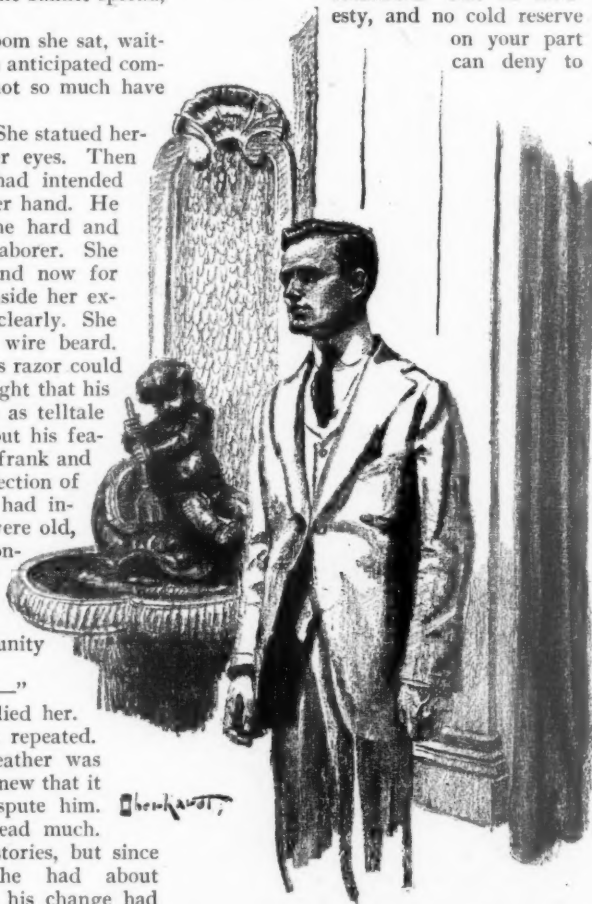
"Mr. Thatcher," she repeated.

He said that the weather was quite remarkable. She knew that it wasn't, but did not dispute him. She asked him if he read much. He used to—detective-stories, but since his—er—reformation, he had about given them up. Surely his change had not helped his conversation. He talked better as a burglar. She made bold to tell him so. Then something cracked the ice; and now it was broken, he tossed off his blinker-bridle and let himself out. He swore that her image had haunted him day and night.

In a flutter her dignity arose. "I can't permit you talk to me like that. It is outrageous."

"What, outrageous that I claim you as a divinity? Outrageous that you in-

spire me with virtue and with strength? You seem to fear that I am going to make love to you. Don't be alarmed. Years of acquaintance and great achievement on my part would not warrant such assurance. But no modesty, and no cold reserve on your part can deny to



He thanked her and arose to go. "Am I to see you again?" he inquired.

me the right of worship as I sit in your presence or as I see your image in my soul."

"Mr. Thatcher!"

"There, I'm done. I simply want you to understand me. My reformation demands that with you I must be perfectly honest."

He began to talk freely of the different phases of life he had encountered. Out of ambush he would spring and surprise her with his piercing insight into the secret caverns of human nature. He had traveled grass-grown paths into sequestered places, unknown to the dullest of all prose writers, the author of the guidebook; and gracefully he betrayed that the detective-story did not cover the scope of his reading. She was delighted with him, her work of reform.

"And now I have a favor to ask of you, Miss Delt. Please use your influence toward getting employment for me in your father's establishment."

The request was simple enough, natural enough; and on a card she wrote:

Father, this is a worthy man. Please give him employment.

He thanked her and arose to go. "Am I to see you again?" he inquired, his head bowed.

She hesitated: "Well, perhaps, if you agree not to mention a certain subject—if you promise not to say: 'No man with a soul—'"

"I promise," he said.

OLD Ambrose gave him work. One morning at breakfast Cerelia inquired:

"How is my protégé getting along?"

"Who's that? Your what?"

"Mr. Thatcher."

"Who's he?"

"Why, the man I requested you to give employment. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, that fellow? He's getting along all right, I guess. He's blacking stoves."

"I should think he's—well, you might say too intelligent for that."

"You should, eh? Well, let me tell you that no man was ever too intelligent for anything he undertook to do. Wisdom can fall downstairs better than ignorance."

Strange, she mused, that she could not keep her mind off that man. About her household duties, in her charity work, in society, his face was ever there to haunt her. In the deep tones of a great symphony orchestra, when an international audience had assembled, she heard his voice, his laugh; and looking up, she

saw him, dreamily absorbed in the music. How lonesome he looked, in the gallery, in the midst of somber-clad men.

On the following evening, a society friend, sitting with Cerelia, said to her: "Why, you know you don't seem nearly as much of a character as you did. At one time you had such radical views, but you haven't any more. The other night I heard a wise woman say: 'Cerelia, why, she's just the same as any other girl in love.' I didn't know you were in love. Are you, dear?"

How ringingly Cerelia laughed! "Love! I never thought of such a thing. That has always been my trouble—having no especial interest in anyone."

Miss Friend thought that modern woman demanded too much, an intelligence equal to her own. "We can't expect men absorbed in business to be as cultivated as we are," she said.

"Oh, to the winds with mere cultivation!" Cerelia cried. "Some of the dullest men I ever met were cultivated. What I look for is strength, unique adaptability to circumstances."

This was not what she intended to say, but let it go. Miss Friend, not understanding what she meant, nodded her approval. She repeated the wise woman's words, that Cerelia was just like any other girl in love.

"But why harp on it?" Cerelia protested. "The woman is an idiot. I forbid you to parrot what a fool says of me."

Down the steps Miss Friend pecked her way with her parasol. Cerelia sat musing, resented it, and mused again. Then she wrote to Thatcher that if he would agree to adhere strictly to his promise he might call the next evening.

He came, dressed somewhat better. About him there were modest touches of refinement. Surely his reformation had been gracious to his wardrobe. He talked with such freedom as to put upon her a forgetfulness that he had ever been a burglar. But she did not wish to forget it. Above all, she did not wish him to forget it. She would permit him to be bright and engaging, but the noted thing about him must be his reformation.

"Do you ever feel—" she began, and hesitated, looking at him. "What I want to say is, do you ever feel a—a moral

dizziness that almost impels you to fall?"

"Well, I can't say as to how moral the dizziness was, but I had a peculiar swimming in the head the other day as I stood on the stepladder."

"Oh, I don't mean that sort of dizziness. I mean have you ever been tempted to fall back into your old ways?"

"No, I am—" He was struggling with himself, evidently in an effort to keep off the forbidden subject.

"Yes?" she said quickly, in but little more than a whisper, encouraging the struggle.

"I am too thoroughly reformed, I hope. What would you advise me to read?"

At that moment she hated him. Didn't he have sense enough to know that he ought to keep his mind on her, make her his book? She looked at him, and her smile was like a faded lily. How she disliked the cool spells that came upon him.

"Our own thoughts are worth more than books," she said.

"Yes, but when your own thoughts grab you and choke you, how about that? How about it when you go to bed and your own thoughts haul you out and march you up and down the room all night?"

He was struggling again, not knowing what to do with his nervous hand; and there was her own hand, exposed on the arm of the chair. The flurry passed, and they sat quietly talking. He struck upon some sort of a recital, and she sighed her applause. Oh, she had not spoken of having seen him at the symphony concert. She spoke of it. He brightened.

"I did not see you, but I felt that—felt that if you were there, you must be enjoying it. Great, wasn't it?"

"Stupid," she yawned. But she let him talk about music. One note was of a countenance with another to him, he told her. To him music was only an emotion, and he knew nothing of a scientific swell of the heart. He liked something to tear him with a glorious distress.

"But don't you like a 'heart-melody,' quiet and simple?"

"Yes, that's all right, but after you learn a tune thoroughly, you get enough

of it, you know. You may hear a symphony ever so many times, and yet it always keeps its plot hidden to surprise you."

She sighed. "More men have been reformed by hymns than by symphonies."

"Yes, simple-minded men. But my nature is more complicated. It takes the big stuff to throw me. Some women are jigs, some pretty lyrics; but once in a long while a woman may be a mighty symphony. You are a symph—"

"Yes?"

He stammered, couldn't talk, while she felt that she ought to advise him to take up the cure for stuttering. But after a time he mastered himself, and in his talk became so charming that she could not hold her resentment. How many things they found that they had in common. They always do. Finally he laughed himself out of his chair, and merrily she arose with him. She went out with him, and together they stood on the steps. The stars were ablaze, and from the park floated the scent of buds, bursting into bloom. When he was gone, she stood there a long time alone; and entering the house, she gave the door a resentful slam, angered that he had kept off the forbidden subject. But she would punish him. For a long time she would banish him from her presence.

CERELIA'S character asserted itself, and she held to her determination not to see her burglar. If he wanted to go to the dogs, and did, it would prove that after all he had no strength of purpose. To her father she did not mention his name. It were easy enough to forget him; she would.

One morning when more than a month had passed, old Ambrose broke out:

"Oh, about that man Boyd Thatcher: he's a wonder."

"In what way?" In cool and mastered inquiry she met his look.

"In more ways than one, I can assure you. Little by little he has been gaining my confidence, first attracting my attention with his devotion to work, and then by his efficiency. Occasionally I'd give him some minor commission to execute, and he did it so well that gradually I broadened his field. Now what? To-day

he shows me that he has closed contracts for heating two new statehouses in the West, and at figures that I hadn't hoped for. He's worth at least ten thousand a year to me, the man I have been looking for and couldn't find, and here you pick him up casually. Where did you find him?"

"Oh, we just happened to meet, I suppose."

"You suppose. You didn't meet him in the street, a stranger, and say: 'Hello! You seem all right. I'll give you a note to my dad. He's looking for you and hasn't got sense enough to find you.' Didn't meet him that way, did you?"

"Father, don't be absurd."

"Do you know anything about his people? He never says anything about his family."

"I know nothing whatever. He appeared to be a worthy man, and I recommended him. That's all I know."

"Well, he's a marvel. Exercise me a little more of that woman intuition, and I'll double my business within a year. A marvel—but I must know something about his people."

Three nights later Cerelia sat with Thatcher, her hand exposed on the back of her chair, and her emotions exposed too; and so were his. Clearly she could see that he was struggling to suppress himself—surely not a pretense, for his mighty hand trembled as he moved it about, apparently not knowing what to do with it. A strong man in love has no sane and middle ground; his attitudes and his utterances are either humorous or pathetic. Thatcher was both, almost at the same instant, a tear in a laughing eye. They had come to the flower-grown stretches of long silences, the dewy pathway fresh on the morn of creation, fresh in the eve of eternity. Suddenly he sprang up from his chair.

"I must go, Miss Delt. I must go and not come back again. I find it impossible to keep my word. I thought that I could attain complete satisfaction in the wor-

ship of you, a divinity. But I find that my heart is agonizing over you, a woman. On my part it was an overestimate of self. I am weaker than I thought."

"You are not weaker. You are stronger!"

That ought to have been enough. It was. In gentled

power he held her to his bosom. In one kiss there can be an age-long thrill. There was.

Out on the steps they stood, the stars ablaze; and there wafted a redolence sweeter than the scent of young buds, the perfume of hearts burst into bloom.

THREE nights had not darkened by when he was with her again, still stronger. He told her of charms she possessed above all other women, charms which he did not think she herself had discovered. She had.

"You will always—always be reformed, wont you?"

"Ah, till reformation ceases to be a virtue," he swore, his calloused hand on his heart.

"And when you become famous and go into politics, you—"

"Wont stay out at night and whoop it up," he swore again.

Then he begged pardon for his "flop-back" into slang. She laughed. She said that without slang no language could have a vital growth. Languages died because they were no longer fed on the fresh milk of slang. He marveled at her wisdom, said that if he were not afraid of losing her, he would let her go to the Senate. She didn't care to go



to the Senate. Possessing him, she had all she desired.

Suddenly she asked: "Dear, who were your people? Father might want to know."

"Ah, yes, I hadn't thought of that. As a shepherd my father herded only one black sheep. He was a reformer, express-agent in a little town in Maine, and broke many a jug of liquor intended for nocturnal poker-games. If it hadn't been for him, no doubt many a worthy would have taken a sniff too much. My mother supplied slippers for the vestry, and I could have wished that she had kept the softer ones at home. I must speak to your father. Come in with me."

SHE went with him. Old Ambrose had a sort of padded cell wherein he could bump his head over hard problems and not disturb the rest of the family. Celia tapped at his door, and he bade her enter. Upon seeing Boyd Thatcher, he inquired:

"Eh, anything wrong?"

"No sir; everything is all right, I hope. Beautiful time of year for the weather."

"What's that?"

"I mean beautiful weather for the time of night."

The old man scowled. "I might be brought to understand the monkey-language the Englishman discovered in Africa, but you've got me."

"Father, Mr. Thatcher has come to ask you a very serious question."

"That so? Then Mr. Thatcher, no bush-beating. What is it?"

Mr. Thatcher stood on one foot, then on the other—and then settled himself on both.

"Mr. Delt, I owe your daughter everything, and I appeal to you, sir, for her hand in marriage."

"Oh, is that so? You owe her everything, and now you ask for her hand. Isn't that rather a queer way to pay a debt?"

"I realize that it is, sir, but I find that without her my existence would be a sentence to perpetual heart-sighing dreariness. As for herself, she is here to speak."

She spoke: "Father, you have always said that I am not like other girls—not realizing the cause: the fact that you are not like other men. I am but yourself feminized. I did not intend ever to marry. The newspapers are full of the pictures of commercial brides. I conceived a contempt for them, and I vowed that I would never marry except for love, and that seemed impossible. But I met Mr. Thatcher—"

"Ah, but how and where?" old Ambrose broke in. "Who are or were his folks? That's what I want to know."

Mr. Thatcher no doubt would have answered for himself, but she didn't give him time.

"His father was a noted Prohibitionist in Maine, and you yourself are a national Prohibitionist," she said. "His mother was a devoted church-worker, and you help to build churches."

The old man turned about and squared himself for a good look at Thatcher.

"And it appears, sir, that your only prospects lie in my good will. But good wills may be capricious."

The young fellow seemed to regard it not so bad to be cornered in a padded cell as in an ordinary office. He smiled.

"My prospects lie in my youth, my strength and my ability. You gave me a chance, but you did not make me capable. I beg your pardon, sir, but I belong to the aristocracy of achievement."

"Young fellow, that's pretty good. They call me a crank. Maybe I am. You have my consent. Shut the door after you, please."

THEN followed a sweet and dreamy season. Every color wore a softened hue. Every note of music rhymed a tenderer echo in the soul. In the gently falling rain, there was a heaven-sent listlessness, a time when the spirit rests itself with musing and with light-drawn sighs. One day the father said:

"Celia, the fact that you are not nervous and frustrated as the day draws near proves more than all else that you are different from other girls. It seemed to me that your mother was half the time in tears, a sort of pre-bridal hys-

teria. I don't think she could have stood it more than a week longer. By the way, I hope you will enjoy your tour of South America."

"South America! I didn't know we were going there."

"Yes, Boyd has agreed to it. You see, I want to extend business in that quarter, and—"

"But I don't like to think of it in that way. I want it to be a journey of sentiment."

"Oh, just enough business to break the monotony, you know. A sort of muscle to sustain the nerves, as it were. Why, when your mother and I went on our wedding-tour, I bought seventy thousand tons of iron-ore. And now along with your climax of heart-interest don't forget other vital interests. Always give truth stare for stare. Don't blink. Old Lord Burleigh said that every aristocracy was based on money, and business is the—the what do you call it? The plinth of money. Don't forget that, as you go along. Money is the life-sap of art. Don't forget that, as you proceed. Money—"

"Gracious, that's enough," she protested. Then in quiet good humor she added: "My carping was wrong. Why shouldn't we combine business with sentiment? Why shouldn't we make business sentimental?"

Old Ambrose cut a slow caper and kissed her.

LIKE Mrs. Delt, the day came tapping along with slippers feet. At his own wedding even an ex-burglar can fall into silent obscurity. He did. But he

was there, just about. In the newspapers he read of it as an event in remote history. But how marvelous a memory had Mrs. Thatcher! She could tell him everything, words of congratulation, the pinched lips of envy, the tears of hopeful maidens, the flutter of a ribbon in the church.

THEY returned from South America.

The old man declared the trip a glorious success. The plants he had contracted to put in would furnish steam enough for a dozen revolutions. One evening he and Thatcher sat in the library. They could hear Cerelia, in the music-room, singing a Brazilian love-song.

"Boyd, you and I are some actors, all right."

"Did pretty well, I think."

"But if she should suspect that those hard hands were caused by golf, that you have been with me for ten years, that you are not only the best agent but the best ad'-writer in the country, that I picked you out and trained you for son-in-law, that the burglary-scheme was a put-up job—"

"Hush, she's coming."

"Ha, Cerelia," said the old man; "we were just talking about another trip for you and Boyd. I'm going to send you to Europe. I'm going to heat the British Isles."

She stood behind him with her arms about his neck. "Awfully nice of you, dear old Dad. . . . And you think my husband is an honorable man, don't you?"

"Sure!" said old Ambrose.

OPIE READ is one of the real personalities in this great land of ours. He's known 'most everybody worth knowing in the last fifty years; he's read 'most everything ever written; and he has written some of the best American stuff. He spends much of his time on the Chautauquas these days, but he reserves enough to put on paper quite a few stories for Red Book readers. You can't get them in any other magazine, but you will find them as a regular feature of this one.

Résumé of the
Opening Chapters
of the new novel

"WE CAN'T HAVE
EVERYTHING!"

This synopsis conveys not only the action of the novel, but the spirit of the story as well. You can read it and begin Mr. Hughes' new story of New York with an adequate knowledge of the theme.

T

HREE women dominate this new novel by Mr. Hughes.

There is Charity Coe Cheever, of unlimited wealth and of such unlimited loveliness of character that everyone called her "Sweet Charity Coe," even after her marriage. She had everything in the world, except the love of her husband, the dashing Peter Cheever. She held that for only a few months after his tempestuous wooing won her from the lifelong adoration of Jim Dyckman. Then Cheever became absorbed in Zada L'Etoile, a dancer.

Then there is Kedzie Thropp, a luscious village peach. Her life in Nimrim, Missouri, was uneventful. She always complained that she never had been anywhere, or seen anything, or known anyone, worth knowing. Her chance came when her father, a claim adjuster, had to go to New York and took Kedzie and her mother with him. On the train, a wag recommended "Mrs. Biltmore's boarding-house." When the tricked Thropp learned Biltmore prices, he ordered Kedzie and her mother to pack. But Kedzie was in love with the grandeur of the hotel. She refused to budge. Thropp *père* asserted himself. He turned Kedzie across his knee and spanked her. That made her obey his commands, but it aroused all her resentment, and in the traffic outside the hotel, she vanished.

WHILE her frantic father and mother were imploring the police and newspapers of New York to help find their daughter, Kedzie had hidden herself in a moving-picture theater. She was fascinated by the play, and adopted the name of one of the characters, Anita Adair, for her career in New York.

That night Kedzie slept in a park. Next morning she breakfasted in a cheap restaurant and flirted with Skip Magruder, the waiter. He found her a job in a candy-store, but she soon left the candy-store to pose for calendar pictures, and there met young Gilfoyle, an advertising writer and a poet.

Kedzie met Charity Coe and Jim Dyckman at the annual fête given by Mrs. Noxon, leader at Newport. They were guests. Kedzie came on as one of the dancing nymphs in a group of entertainers. While dancing, Kedzie slipped on a wet stone and fell into the fountain pool. Dyckman rescued her, but the manager of the troupe "fired" her. Charity was touched then, and promised to help the girl get a new job.

The first job Kedzie got was that of wife to Gilfoyle. She married him in haste the day after she returned to New York, and repented in greater haste.

Charity forgot the girl till she decided to give a great motion-picture play, with society folks as actors, to help the French war orphans. Incidentally she managed to get Kedzie a position with a motion-picture company. There the girl's lush beauty commanded instant attention. Ferriday, the director, promised to make her the best-known woman in the world.

Kedzie's next meeting with Dyckman came in the studio. Charity had induced Jim to act as manager for her show. He capitulated as quickly before Kedzie's soft beauty as lesser men had done.

Ferriday immediately conceived the scheme of having Dyckman finance a film company to star Kedzie. He got Dyckman to spend a lot of money advertising her, but Jim was not anxious to act as "angel" for a new company. Instead, when the studio where she had been working burned, he proposed marriage. Nothing would have pleased Kedzie more than to marry him at once, for by now her ambition was to become of "the society world;" but there was Gilfoyle as a barrier.

While she was wishing that she might see the poet and reason with him, Gilfoyle had seen her films in Chicago, where he had gone to "accept a position,"

and was hastening back to New York. But when he arrived, she was so overwhelmed that she scratched his face and ordered him out. He heard of Jim Dyckman's attentions and decided to make Jim pay well for "stealing" his wife.

MEANTIME Sweet Charity Coe had put detectives on Cheever and Zada L'Etoile. They installed a dictagraph in Zada's apartment, and eavesdropping over its wire, Charity found that her husband was even more at home in his mistress' home than in his wife's and, worst of all, that Zada the dancer was to mother him a child. Even her beloved pastor could not quite convince her that she should countenance that.

She sent for Jim and told him her plight. He raged about from club to club till he found Cheever, and although he too was badly battered in the fight that followed, Cheever was knocked out. Charity, of course, resented his method of championing her, and her attitude made him welcome an invitation to spend the evening with Kedzie.

He came upon Kedzie's mother and father. They had seen one of her films in Nimrim and had come on to take her—and her fame and fortune—back to their hearts.

JIM scarcely had time to embrace Kedzie, after the Thropps had gone into the kitchen, when in walked Gilfoyle and his friend Connery, a reporter-detective. They demanded money. Jim answered by taking the two would-be blackmailers by the scruff of the neck and knocking their heads together. They were shocked even more when Mr. and Mrs. Thropp rushed in from the kitchen and disclosed themselves as mother and father of Kedzie and chaperons of her and Jim.

The poet and the detective left in a daze. As they passed under the "L" structure, Gilfoyle got in the path of a speeding taxi.

His death cleared the way for Jim and Kedzie to marry. Jim's infatuation had begun to cool, but he saw no way out. He didn't care much, anyway, for he still thought Charity Coe was lost to him. He did not know that she and Cheever had agreed on a divorce. Charity's religious soul hated the thought, but she felt that the baby which was on the way was entitled to a name.

And so Kedzie and Jim were married. But they didn't live happily, even for a short time. They were about as unsuited as a pair could be. Jim's mother and father tried to love Kedzie, though they were heartbroken, but she could not be natural with them and there never was any real affection. If she had made Jim happy, they would have forgotten her faults, but she didn't. Neither was she happy, for she found that in this, as in all other things, she much preferred the heights she saw ahead to those she had attained.

And Charity Coe was unhappy too. Though she never had admitted it to herself, she had retained a feeling that, once rid of Cheever, she might find comfort in the devotion of Jim. She was more astounded by his marriage than anyone else, but she tried to make the best of it and to be Kedzie's friend. But Kedzie would have none of her.

And now the story draws toward its most dramatic phases. It is continued on the next page.



Peter
Cheever

WE CAN'T HAVE

By
Rupert Hughes

Author of "What Will People Say?" "Empty Pockets"
and "The Thirteenth Commandment."

CHAPTER LX



CHARITY COE was fashionable and wise, but her wisdom had lifted her above pettiness.

SOMETIMES Jim Dyckman was foolish enough to wish that he had been his wife's first lover. But a man has to get up pretty early to be that to any woman.

The minxes begin to flirt with the milk-bottle, then with the doctor and then to cherish a precocious passion for the first rag sailor doll.

Jim had come as near as any man may to being a woman's first love in the case of Charity, and what good had it done him? He was the first boy Charity had ever played with. Her nurse had bragged about her to his nurse, when Charity was just beginning to take notice of other than alimentary things. By that time Jim was a blasé roué of five, and his main interest in Charity was a desire to poke his finger into the soft spot in her head.

The nurses restrained him in time, and his proud, lithe young mother of then, when she heard of it, decided that he was destined to be a great explorer. His young father sniffed that he was more likely to be a gynecologist. They had a grand quarrel over their son's future. He became none of the things they feared or hoped that he would, and he carried out none of his own early ambitions.

His first impressions of Charity ranged from contempt, through curiosity, to protectiveness and affection. She got his heart first by being helpless. He began by picking up the things she let fall from her carriage or threw overboard and immediately cried for again. She had been human enough to do a good deal of that. When things cumbered her crib or her perambulator, she brushed them into space and then repented after them.

Following her marriage to Peter Cheever, she did just that with Jim Dyckman. His love cluttered up her domestic serenity, and she chucked it overboard. And then she wanted it again. Then her husband chucked her overboard, and she felt that it would not be so lonesome out there since Jim would be out there too. But she found that he had picked himself up and toddled away with Kedzie. And now he could not

EVERYTHING!

Illustrated by
James
Montgomery
Flagg

pick Charity up any more. His wife wouldn't let him.

JIM did not know that he wanted to pick Charity up again till he called on her to ask her to call on his wife and pick Kedzie up out of her loneliness. It was a terrific thought to the simple-minded Jim when it came over him that the Charity Coe he had adored and given up as beyond his reach on her high pedestal was now lying at the foot of it with no worshiper at all. Jim was the very reverse of a snob. Kedzie had won his devotion by seeming to need it. She had lost it by showing that she cared less for him than for the things she thought he could get for her.

And now Charity needed his love, or somebody's. There were two potent principles in Jim's nature, as in many another man's and woman's: one was an instant eagerness to help anybody in trouble; another was an instant resentment of any coercion. Jim could endure neither bossing nor being bossed; restraint of any sort irked him. There may have been Irish blood in him, but at any rate the saying was as true of him as of the typical Irishman: "You can lead him to hell easier than you can drive him an inch."

When Jim left Charity's house, his heart ached to think of her distressful with loneliness. When he realized that somehow Kedzie was automatically preventing him from helping Charity, his marital bonds began to chafe. He began to understand that matrimony was hampering his freedom. He had something to resent on his own behalf.

He had been so troubled with the thought of his shortcomings in devotion to Kedzie that he had not pondered how much he had surrendered. He had repented his inability to give Kedzie his entire and fanatic love. He saw that he had at least given his precious liberty of soul into her little hands.

Galled as he was at this comprehension, he began to think over the lessons of his honeymoon and to see that Kedzie had not given him entirety of devotion any more than he her. Little selfishnesses, exactions, tyrannies, petulances, began to recur to him. He was in



KEDZIE was of the village, for all her Parisian garb, and she had cunning, which is the lowest form of wisdom.

the dangerous frame of mind of a bridegroom thinking things over. At that time it behooves the bride to exert her fascinations and prove her devotion as never before.

Kedzie, knowing nothing of Jim's call on Charity or of his new mood, chanced to be in a most unfortunate humor. She criticised Jim; she declined to be amused or entertained—rebuffed his advances, ridiculed his pretensions of love. She even chose to denounce his mother for her heartlessness, his sister for her neglect, his father for his snobbery. That is always bad business. It puts a husband at bay with his back against the foundation walls of loyalty. They quarreled wonderfully and slept *dos-à-dos*. They did not speak the next morning.

THE next afternoon Jim saw to his dismay that Kedzie was putting on her hat and gloves to go out on a shopping cruise. If she went, she would miss Charity's call.

He knew that he ought not to tell her of Charity's visit in advance. In fact, Charity had pledged him to a benevolent conspiracy in the matter. He put up a flag of truce and resumed diplomatic relations.

With the diplomatic cunning of a hippopotamus he tried to decoy Kedzie into staying at home awhile. His ponderous subtlety aroused Kedzie's suspicions, and at length he confirmed them by desperately confessing:

"Mrs. Cheever is going to call."

Kedzie's first thought was of Peter Cheever's new wife, who had been taken up by a certain set of those whom one may call loose-principled or divinely tolerant, as one's own prejudices direct. Kedzie could not yet afford to be so forgiving. She flared up:

"That Zada thing is going to call on me? How dare she!"

"Of course not."

"Oh, the other one, then?"

"Yes."

"The abandoned one?"

"That's pretty rough. She's been very kind to you, and she wants to be again."

"Where did you learn so much?"

"We were talking about you."

"Oh, you were, were you? That's nice! And where was all this?"

He indulged in a concessive lie for the sake of the peace: "I met her in the street and walked along with her."

"Fine! And how did my name come to come up?"

"It naturally would. I was saying that I wished she'd —er—I wished that you and she might be friends."

"So that you and she could see each other still oftener, I suppose?"

"It's rotten of you to say that."

"And it's rottener of you to go talking to another woman about your wife."

"But it was in the friendliest spirit, and she took it so."

"I see! Her first name is Charity, and I'm to be one of her patients. Well, you can receive her yourself. I don't want any of her old alms! I won't be here!"

"Oh, yes, you will!"

"Oh, no, I won't!"

"You can't be as ill-mannered as that!"

"You talk to me of manners! Why, I've seen manners in your gang that would disgrace a brakeman and a lunch-counter girl on one of Dad's railroads." Her father already had railroads! So many people had them in the crowd she met, that Kedzie was not strong enough to deny her father one or two.

KEDZIE had taken the most violent dislike to Charity for a dozen reasons, all of them perfectly human and natural, and nasty and unjustifiable, and therefore ineradicable. The first one was that odious matter of obligation. Gratitude has been wisely diagnosed as a lively sense of benefits to come. The deadly sense of benefits gone by is known as ingratitude.

No one knows just what the divinely unpardonable sin is; but the humanly, or at least womanly, unpardonable sin is to have known one's husband well before the wife met him, and then to try to be nice to the wife. To have known the wife in her humble days and to have done her a favor makes the sin unmentionable as well as unpardonable.

Jim Dyckman had involved himself in Charity's crime by trying to get Charity to help his wife again. It was bad enough that Charity had got Ked-



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

When Jim was all dressed in his olive-drab, Kedzie still could not let him go. She held him with her soft arms and twiddled the gun-metal buttons of his blouse. And when at length she must make an end of farewells, she hugged him with all her might and was glad that the hard buttons hurt the delicate breast that he felt against him smotheringly sweet and perilously yielding.

zie a job in the past and had sent Jim Dyckman to make sure that she got it. But for Jim, after Kedzie and he had been married-and-all, to ask Charity to rescue Kedzie from her social failure was monstrous.

The fact that Jim had felt sorry for his lonely Kedzie marooned on an iceberg in mid-society was humiliating enough; but for Charity to dare to feel sorry for Kedzie too, and to come sailing after her—Kedzie shuddered when she thought of it.

She fought with her husband until it was too late for her to get away. Charity's card came in while they were still wrangling. Kedzie announced that she was not at home. Jim told the servant "Wait!" and gave Kedzie a look that she rather enjoyed. It was what they call a cave-man look. She felt that he already had his hands in her hair and was dragging her across the floor bumpitty-bump. It made her scalp creep deliciously. She was rather tempted to goad him on to action. It would have a movie thrill.

But the look faded from Jim's eye, and the blaze of wrath dulled to a gray contempt. She was afraid that he might call her what she had once overheard Pet Bettany call her—"a common little mucker." That sort of contempt seared like a splash of vitriol.

Kedzie was a self-made lady, and she wanted to conceal the authorship from the great-grandmother-built ladies she encountered.

She pouted a moment; then she said to the servant: "We'll see her."

She turned to Jim. "Come along—I'll go and pet your old cat and get her off my chest."

CHAPTER LXI

JIM thudded dismally along in Kedzie's wake. Charity was in the drawing-room wearing her politest face. She could tell from Kedzie's very pose that she was as welcome as a submarine.

Kedzie said "Awfully decent of you to come!" and gave her a handful of cold, limp fingers.

Charity politely pretended that she had called unexpectedly and that she

was in dire need of Kedzie's aid. She made herself unwittingly ridiculous in the eyes of Kedzie, who knew and despised her motive, not appreciating at all the consideration Charity was trying to show.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Mrs. Dyckman," Charity began, "but I've got to throw myself on your mercy. A few of us are getting up a new stunt for the settlement-work fund. It is to be rather elaborate and ought to make a lot of money. It is to represent a day in the life of a New York 'bud.' You can have your choice of several rôles, and I hope you will lend us a hand."

Kedzie had heard of this project, and she had gnawed her bitter heart in a chagrin of yearning to take part in it. She had not been invited, and she had blenched every time she thought of it. She was so much relieved at being asked that she almost forgave Charity for her benevolence. She stammered: "It's awfully decent of you to ask me. I'll do my bit with the greatest of pleasure."

She rather regretted those last five words. They were a bit Nimrimmy.

Charity sketched the program for her.

"*The Bud* is discovered in bed. A street piano wakes her. There is to be a dance to a hurdy-gurdy. Then *The Bud* has breakfast. It is served by a dancing maid and butler. Tom Duane is to be the butler. You could be—no, you wouldn't fancy the maid, I imagine." Kedzie did not fancy the maid. Charity went on: "The girl dresses and goes to a rehearsal of the Junior League. That's to be a ballet of Harlequins and Columbines. She goes from there to her dressmaker's. I am to play the dressmaker. I have my mannequins, and you might want to play one of those and wear the latest thing; or you could be one of the customers. You can think it over."

"Then the girl is seen reading a magazine, and there is a dance of cover-girls. If you have any favorite illustrator, you could be one of his types."

"Next *The Bud* goes to an art exhibition. This year Zuloaga is the craze, and several of his canvases will come to life. Do you care for Zuloaga?"

"Immensely! But—" Kedzie said, wondering just what Zuloaga did to his canvases. She had seen a Cubist exhibi-

tion that gave her a headache, and she thought that it might have something to do with the Zulus.

Charity ran on: "After dinner *The Bud* goes to the theater and sees a pantomime and a series of ballets, dolls of the nations—Chinese, Polish—also nursery characters. You could select something in one of those dances, perhaps.

"And last of all there is a chimney-sweep's dance as the worn-out *Bud* crawls into bed. If none of these suits you, we'd be glad to have any suggestion that occurs to you. Of course, a girl of to-day does a thousand more things than I've mentioned. But the main thing is, we want you to help us out.

"You are—if you'll forgive me for slapping you in the face with a bouquet—you are exquisitely beautiful, and I know that you dance exquisitely."

"How do you know that?" Kedzie asked rashly.

"I saw you once as a—" Charity paused, seeing the red run across Kedzie's face. She had stumbled into Kedzie's past again, and Kedzie's resentment braced her hurt pride.

CHARITY tried to mend matters by a little advice:

"You mustn't blush, my dear Mrs. Dyckman. If I were in your place, I'd go around bragging about it. To have been a Greek dancer—what a beautiful past!"

"Thanks!" said Kedzie curtly and with basilisk eyes. "I think I'd rather not dance any more. I'm an old married woman now. If you don't mind, I'll be one of the customers at your shop. I'll come in in the rippingest gown Jim can buy. I'll feel more comfortable, too, under your protection, Mrs. Cheever."

Jim laughed, and Kedzie grinned. But she was canny. She was thinking that she would be safest among that pack of wolves if she relied on her money to buy something dazzling, rather than on the beauty that Charity alleged. She did not want to dance before those people again. She would never forget how her foot had slipped at Newport and she had provoked a howl of laughter by her backward plunge into the pool.

Moreover she felt that she would be sheltered a little from persecution beneath the wing of Charity. It rather pleased her to treat Charity as a motherly sort of person. It is the most deliciously malicious compliment a woman can pay another.

Charity did not fail to receive the stab. But it amused her, so far as she was concerned. She felt that Kedzie was like one of those incorrigible *gamin*s who throw things at kindly visitors to the slums. She felt sorry for Jim and wondered again by what strange devices he had been led to marry so incompatible a girl as Kedzie.

Jim wondered too. He sat and watched the two women, wondering as men do when they see women painfully courteous to each other, wondering as women must when they see men polite to their enemies.

Charity and Kedzie prattled on in a kind of two-story conversation, and Jim studied them with shameless objectivity. He hardly heard what they said. He watched the pantomime of their so different souls and bodies. Charity, lean and smart and aristocratic, beautiful in a peculiar mixture of sophistication and tenderness; Kedzie small and nymph-like and plebeian, beautiful in a mixture of innocence and hardness of heart.

Charity's body was like the work of a dashing painter, long lines drawn with brave force and direction. Kedzie's body was a thing of dainty curves and timidities. Charity was fashionable and wise, but her wisdom had lifted her above pettiness. Kedzie was of the village, for all her Parisian garb, and she had cunning, which is the lowest form of wisdom.

WHEN at length Charity left, Jim and Kedzie sat brooding. Kedzie wanted to say something nice about Charity and was afraid to. The poor child always distrusted her generous impulses. She thought it cleverer to withhold trust from everybody, lest she misplace it in somebody. At length an impulse of perversity taught her how to get rid of the credit she owed to Charity. She spoke after a long silence.

"Mrs. Cheever must be horribly fond of you."



Kedzie hurried to encourage the infatuated Marquess. Counting upon winning him somehow as her husband, she gave caution than Strathdene could not be imagined, but otherwise he was as arrant a scamp as ever. While American sense. Kedzie was determined that he should live long enough for her to free found Strathdene as easy of fascination as her old movie

him encour
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JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

him encouragement beyond any she had given her other swains. A purer patriot or a warrior more free of any taint of he wanted to "carry on" in the brave new English sense, it amused him to "carry on" in the mischievous old herself from Jim and make the Marquessate hers. She seemed to be succeeding. She audiences had been. Their dalliance became the talk of Newport.

"Why do you say that?" said Jim, startled.

"Because she's so nice to me."

Jim groaned with disgust. Kedzie giggled, accepting the groan as confession of a palpable hit. She sat musing on various costumes she might wear. She had a woman's memory for things she had caught glimpses of in shop windows or in fashion magazines; she had a woman's imagination for dressing herself up mentally.

As a trained mathematician can do amazing sums in his head, so Kedzie could juggle modes and combinations, colors and stuffs, and wrap them about herself. While Kedzie composed her new gown, her husband studied her, still puzzled by her and his inability to get past the barriers of her flesh to her soul. Charity's flesh seemed but the expression of herself. It was cordial and benevolent, warm and expressive in his eyes. Her hands were for handclasp, her lips for good words, her eyes for honest language. He had not embraced her except in dances years before, and in that one quickly broken embrace at Newport. He had not kissed her since they had been boy and girl lovers, but the savor of her lips was still sweet in his memory. He felt that he knew her soul utterly.

He had possessed all the advantages of Kedzie without seeming to get acquainted with the ultimate ulterior Kedzie at all. She was to him well-known flesh inhabited by a total stranger, who fled from him mysteriously. When she embraced him, she held him aloof. When she kissed him, her lips pressed him back. He could not outgrow the feeling that their life together was a reckless liaison rather than a communion of merged souls.

He stared at her now and saw dark eyebrows and eyelashes etched on a white skin, starred with irises of strange hue, a nose deftly shaped, a mouth as pretty and as impersonal as a flower, a throat of some ineffably exquisite petal-material. She sat with one knee lifted a little and clasped in her hands, and there was something miraculous about the felicity of the lines, the arms penciled downward from the shoulders and meeting in the delicately contoured buckle of her ten fingers, the thigh springing

in a suave arc from the confluent planes of her torso, the straight shin to the curve of instep and toe and heel. Her hair was an altogether incredible extravagance of manufacture.

George Meredith has described a woman's hair once for all, and if Jim had ever read anything so important as "The Egoist," he would have said that Kedzie's poll was illustrated in that wonderfully coiffed hairlike sentence picturing *Clara Middleton* and "the softly dusky nape of her neck, where this way and that the little lighter-coloured irreclaimable curls running truant from the comb and the knot—curls, half-curls, root-curls, vine-ringlets, wedding-rings, fledgeling feathers, tufts of down, blown wisps—waved or fell, waved over or up or involutedly, or strayed, loose and downward, in the form of small silken paws, hardly any of them much thicker than a crayon shading, cunninger than long, round locks of gold to trick the heart."

Kedzie's hair was as fascinating as that, and she had many graces and charms. For a while they had proved fascinating, but a man does not want to have a cartoon for a wife, however complexly beautiful. Jim wanted a congenial companion—that is to say, he wanted Charity Coe.

But he could not have her. If he had been one of the patriarchs or a virtuous man of Mohammedan stock, he could have tried by marrying a female quartet to make up one good all-round wife. But he was doomed to a single try, and he had picked the wrong one.

CHAPTER LXII

WHAT is a man to do who realizes that he has married the wrong woman?

The agonies of the woman who has been married to the wrong man have been celebrated innumerable, and vats of tears spilled over them. She used to be consigned to a husband by parental choice and compulsion. Those days are part of the good old times.

For a man there never has been any sympathy, since he has not usually been the victim of parental despotism in the matter of selecting a spouse, or when he

has been, he has had certain privileges of excursion. The excursion is still a popular form of mitigating the severities of an unsuccessful marriage. Some commit murder, some commit suicide, some commit other things. Marriage is the one field in which instinct is least trustworthy, and it is the one field in which it is accounted immoral to repent errors of judgments or to correct them.

The law has found it well to concede a good deal to the criminals. After centuries of vain cruelty, lawyers found that certain people simply could not be made good by any rigor of confinement or any heaping-up of punishment. So the law has come down to the criminal, with results no worse at the worst than before, and sublimely better at the best than before.

The civil law is slowly doing the same for the malmarrried. But Jim Dyckman was not even dreaming of seeking a rescue from his mistake by way of a divorce.

Charity had entered the divorce-court, and she would always bear the reproach of some of her most valued friends. She could not imaginably encourage Jim Dyckman to free himself by the same channel, and if he did, how could Charity marry him? The marriage of the two divorcees would provoke a tempest of horror from part of the world, and gales of ridicule from the rest. Besides, there was no sign that Kedzie would ever give Jim cause for divorce, or that he would make use of it if she gave it him.

Charity could not help pondering the situation, for she saw that Jim was hopelessly mismated. Jim could not help pondering the situation, for he saw the same thing. But he made no plans for release. Kedzie had given no hint of an inclination to misconduct. She was certainly not going to follow Gilfoyle into the beyond. Jim was left helpless with an unanswerable riddle on his mind.

He could only curse himself for being fool enough to get married, and join the vast club of the Repenters at Leisure. He felt sorrier for Kedzie than ever, but he also felt sorry for himself.

The better he came to know his wife, the more he came to know how alien she was to him in how many ways. The

things she wanted to be or seem were utterly foreign to his own ideals; and if people's ambitions war, what hope have they of sympathy.

Jim could not help noticing how Kedzie was progressing in her snobology. She had had many languages to learn in her brief day. She had had to change from Missouri to flat New York, then upward through various strata of diction. She had learned to speak with a certain elegance as a movie princess. But she had learned that people of social position do not talk on stilts outside of fiction. She had since been trying to acquire the rough slang of her set. It was not easy to be glib in it. She had attained only a careful carelessness as yet. But she was learning! As soon as she had attained a careless carelessness, she would be qualified.

BUT there was another difficulty. She had not yet been able to make up her mind as to what character she should play in her new world. That had to be settled before she could make her final choice of dialect, for dialect is character, and she had found to her surprise that the upper world contained as great a variety of characters as any other level.

There were tomboys and hoydens and solemn students; hard-working sculptresses and dreamy poetesses; girls who wanted to be boys, and girls who wanted to be nuns; girls who were frantic to vote and girls who loathed the thought of independence; girls who ached to shock people and girls of the prunes-and-prismatic type; patricians and precians, anarchists and Bohemians.

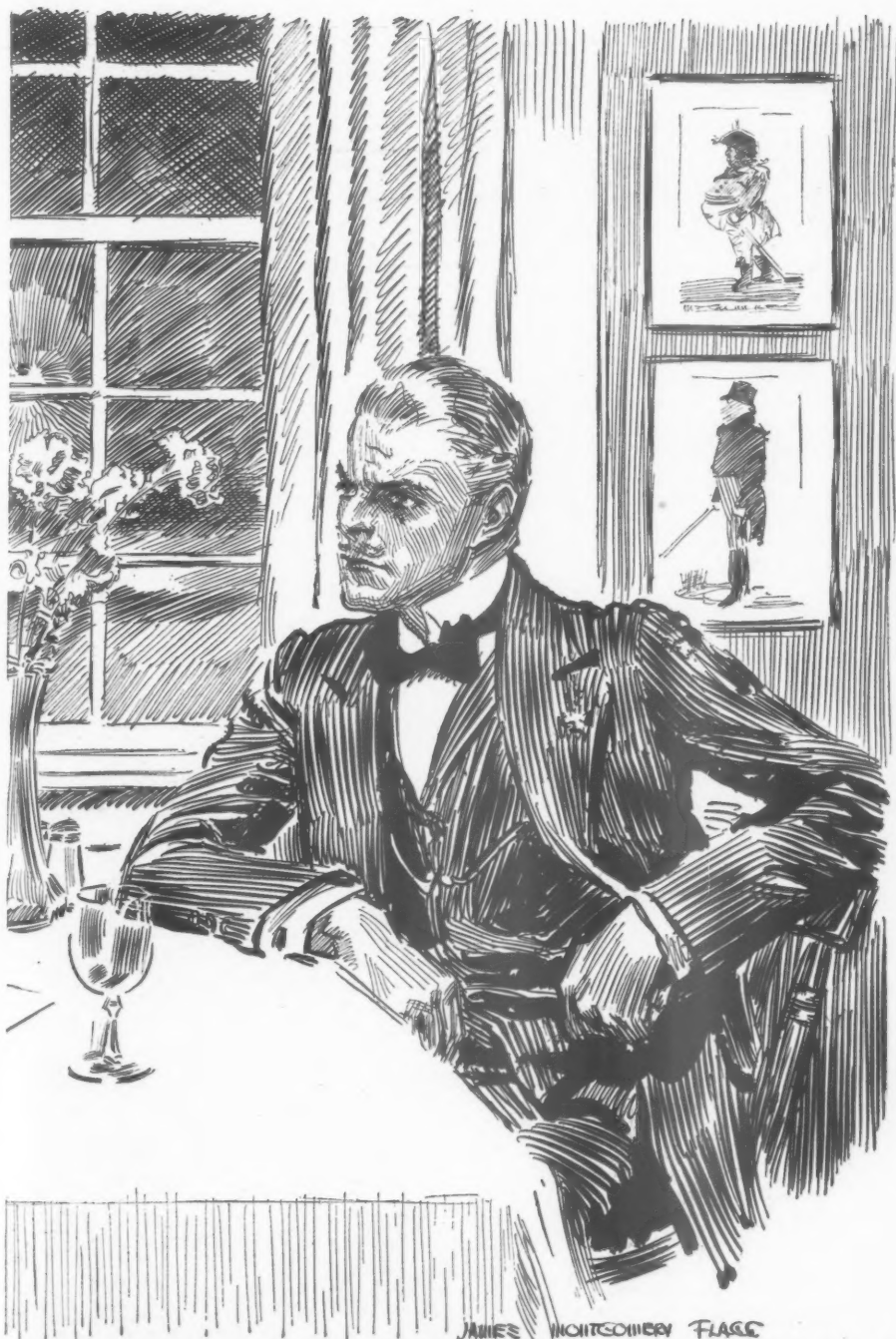
She encountered girls who talked appallingly about breeding dogs, and girls who talked Greek about new schools of art—Futurism, Vorticism; their main interest was Ismism. There were others whose intellectuality ran to new card-mathematics in pirate bridge—gambling algebra.

Kedzie was in a chaos of sincere convictions and even more sincere affectations. She could not select an attitude for herself. She could not recapture her own soul or decide what she wanted to be.

Her life was busy. She had to learn French, and numberless intricacies of



The terror Skip's footsteps inspired was confirmed by the unforgettable voice that came across her icy shoulder-blades, remembering that she had once admired his skill! The Marquess looked up at him on the table, the other on his hip, and demanded with



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLACE

He slapped the china and silver down with the familiar bravura of a quick-lunch waiter, and Kedsie's heart sank, with a glare of rebuke as Skip posed himself patiently with one hand, knuckles down, misplaced enthusiasm: "Well, folks, w'at's it goin' to be?"

fashionable ethics. She had already learned to ride a horse for her moving-picture work, but Jim warned her that she must learn to jump so that she could follow the hounds with him. She watched pupils in hurdling and dreaded to add that to her accomplishments. It made her seasick to witness the race to the barrier, the gathering of the horse, the launch into space, the clatter of the top-bar as it came off sometimes, the grunting thud of the big brute as it returned to earth and galloped away, not always with the rider still aboard. She imagined herself skirled along the tan-bark, and was afraid.

She had to summon all the courage of her movie days before she could intrust herself to a riding master. Soon she grew to like the excitement; she learned to charge a fence, hand the horse his head at the right moment and take it back at the exact second. And by and by she was laughing at other beginners and talking horsey talk with such assurance that she rather gave the impression of tracing straight back to the Centaurs.

Likewise now she watched other newcomers and rank outsiders break into the sacred inclosure. She mocked them and derided them. She regretted aloud the unfortunate marriages of well-born fellows with actresses and commoners from beyond the pale. Among the first French words she learned to use was *mésalliance*.

She began to wonder if she had not made one herself. She found inside the paddock so many men more brilliant than her husband. There were as many types of man as of woman: the earnest, the ascetic, the socialistic, the pious youth, wastrels, rakes, fops. There were richer men than Jim, and men of still older family.

She had been married only a few weeks, and she was already speculating in comparisons! It was a more or less inescapable result of a marriage for ambition, since each ambition achieved opens an horizon of further ambitions.

She had a brief spell of delight in the rehearsals of "The Day of the Bud." She met new people informally, and they were all so shy and self-conscious that they were not inclined to resent Kedzie's

intrusion. Kedzie would once have ridiculed them as "amachours;" now she wished that she too were only an amateur instead of a reformed professional.

If some of the ladies snubbed her, she found others that cultivated her; a few of the humbler women even toadied to her position; a few of the men snuggled up to her picturesque beauty. She snubbed them with vigor. She hated them and felt smirched by their challenges. That was splendid of her.

She was beginning to find herself and her party, but outside the circle of Jim's immediate entourage. And Jim was beginning to find himself a new ambition and a new circle of friends.

JIM was becoming a military man. It took him away from womankind, saved him from temptation and freed his thoughts from the obsession of either Kedzie or Charity. The whole nation was turning again toward soldiering, drifting slowly and resistingly but helplessly into the very things it had long denounced as Prussianism and conscription. A universal mobilization was brewing that should one day compel all men and all women, even little boys and girls and the very old, to become part of a giant machinery for warfare.

England also had railed at conscription, and when the war smote her had seen her little army of a quarter of a million almost annihilated under the first avalanche of the German descent toward Paris. England had gathered volunteers and trained them behind the bulwark of her navy and the red wall of the bleeding French nation. And England had given up volunteering and gone into the business of making everybody, without distinction of sex, age or degree, contribute life and liberty and luxury to the common cause.

Behind the bulwark of the British fleet and the allied armies the United States had debated, not for weeks or months but for years, with academic sloth the enlargement of its tiny army. It had accomplished only the debate, a ludicrous haggle between those who turned their backs on the world-war and said that war was impossible and those who declared that it was inevitable.

Continued on page 603 of this issue.

He rolled a cigarette
and patiently
began his
vigil.



The Hot Tamale Kid

By Harry
Irving
Greene

ILLUSTRATED BY
GAYLE HOSKINS

THE Hot Tamale Kid was tall and straight. He was deep of chest, long and strong of limb and had the clean-cut lines and easy movements of a grayhound. And he had the grayhound's lightning agility. He could leap upon the back of the tallest horse along the border without laying hand on it; he had the trick of being able to keep that horse upon its feet long after it would have fallen beneath most good riders, and he knew every cow-path and pig-trail over a section of country as large as some Eastern States. So it will be seen that in many ways he was a man of parts, accomplishments and resources. In the things that belonged to his manner of life he was a specialist. In some of them he was nothing short of a genius.

We might cite as an instance the ancient and honorable game of gun-play. Gun-play is in a way analogous to billiards. Out of the hundred million people in this country, there are not over a dozen real geniuses at billiards. Not one man in ten thousand could ever become a real expert at the game if he practiced daily from the cradle to the grave. Just why this is so nobody knows. Many of the ten thousand have humanly perfect eyesight, steadiness of nerves, excellent judgment of angles, high intelligence, good stroke—apparently everything that goes to make up an expert; yet they are never able to arise

above the mere "shark" class. Then along will come some cross-eyed, neurasthenic, unmathematical fourteen-year-old boy who can scarcely look over the rail of the table and yet who will be a natural wizard. With only a few months' experience at the game, he will make all the veterans look like an omnibus beside an aeroplane. And there you are. There is no accounting for it.

So there was no explaining the Kid's wizardry with firearms. At fifteen he was a wonder, at twenty an unholy fright. His quickness was uncanny. He could turn his back upon a fast gun-man and then whirl and beat him to it. Nor did he inherit his genius. His mother had been an Apache squaw, and no Indian ever was a great shot; and his father, who had been half Mexican and half white, died in a running noose because of his bad shooting. Had it not been for the Kid's unusual gifts, it is probable that he would have lived and died a plain, unhonored cowpuncher instead of rising to the dizzy height and glory of a bad, bad man. But on the other hand, he probably would have lived longer. So there you are again. As it was, his great talents cried out for an audience, and so great was his light that it could not be concealed beneath a

bushel. Therefore, in celebration of the day which ushered him into manhood, he had decided to start the fireworks.

THE KID started in his day by knifing a Mexican just because the latter refused him a drink of *mescal* out of his bottle; then he shot the other's partner because the latter said it was "too, too bad." He excused himself afterward by saying that he would not have shot if the other party had merely said that it was "too" bad and let it go at that. But the "too, too" business got on his nerves.

Having done this in order to get himself on edge, the Kid next performed a couple of really artistic jobs. He vanished into the chaparral, and going to the house of a friend of his, calmly waited. A few days later the sheriff rode up to the place, threw his gun down upon the Kid and requested that the latter return with him to Pampas City for trial. The slaughtered pair had merely been Mexicans, and in view of that fact the sheriff was disposed to be friendly with him and only asked him to hand over his gun butt first as a mere formality.

Seeming to feel very sheepish that he had allowed the other to get the drop on him, the Kid proceeded to obey. But in the midst of the transfer something happened. The Kid's revolver spun in the air like a top and exploded before the sheriff could even wink, much less pull his trigger. So down he went, and the Kid sent his body back to his widow by express prepaid, with his regrets and the hope that they would not be fools enough to send anybody else after him.

Thereafter the Kid once more disappeared for a bit, and then one day he walked in upon the new sheriff. He was apparently unarmed, and even went so far as to raise a glass to his lips and his eyes toward the ceiling as he drank. The new sheriff was some gun-man himself, and now he thought his opportunity had come. Quick as the strike of a rattler, he made his play—and again something happened. From somewhere the Kid shot him without even removing the glass from his lips.

Again the Kid took to the brush until the chase got too hot, and then crossed

the river and entered the Zona Libra, where he knew no one would follow. From time immemorial the Zona Libra has been, and is to-day, a place where officers of the law are not regarded as desirable citizens. It is bandit- and guerrilla-land, and whoever invades it is not insurable. But the Kid gave the matter scarcely a thought. The taking of risks was an incident to his profession; he was part Mexican, and although American born and claiming to be intensely loyal to his country, he could speak the other language as well as the next one. Also he had friends over there. So across the yellow stream he plowed and went riding into No Man's Land.

IN the Zona Libra the Kid stayed for quite a while and did a number of things more or less interesting. First he lost all his money at monte—which so disgusted him that he waited a few nights and then decided to return and get it back. And he did. Toying with his gun, he walked in upon the gamblers who had defrauded him, making the casual remark that *dinero* was the root of all evil and that he was a root-hog—also that life was uncertain even when people faced the wall with their hands up, and that time was fleeting. So they humored him and lined up with hands aloft, while he deliberately scooped up all the money in sight, backed to the door, shot out the lone lamp and left them enshrouded in total darkness. When they heard the beat of his horse's hoofs, they rushed outside *en masse*, only to find that he had been swallowed by the maw of the darkness. So, after a few perfunctory shots, they went back in search of another light and to resume the game under straitened circumstances. Nobody had been killed, and they were not particularly shocked or resentful.

Concluding that he had exhausted his usefulness in that vicinity for the time being, the Kid rode all night, and the next morning found himself in what is left of Matamoros. A few years back, Matamoros had been a prosperous city of a score or two thousands, but it had been captured and recaptured so often by various patriotic armies that there was not much left of it. Here the Kid

fell in with Luís De Rosa and a bunch of the latter's gallant horsemen.

THIS was before the troops went to the border and spoiled things, and when life along the river was worth living—and killing. De Rosa was also quite a genius. He was full of life, *mescal* and opinions, one of the latter being that he did not like live Americans. It was due as much to this opinion and the activities which accompanied it as to anything else, that at last the border situation got beneath the pachydermic hide of this great government. His specialty was crossing the river at night with about a dozen of his *compadres*, raiding small settlements, burning ranches and running off cattle and horses.

The ranches were generally quite a distance apart, and the settlements he visited did not amount to much in the way of population. Besides, he always made his calls at unconventional hours when he was not expected, and all the advantages were upon his side. He was a genius in the way of surprise parties. The peacefully sleeping people would hear a midnight rush of horses, the yells of men and a lot of shooting; and unless there was an attempt at resistance, the gang would run off what was before them—or perhaps raid a store for ammunition and then be on their way before the ranchers or citizens could get into their clothes and action.

If anybody showed himself, the invaders would kill him and probably apply the torch as well. Sometimes they did it anyway, when they happened to be feeling pretty good. By morning they would be back across the river and safe once more—that is, if they were lucky. But they were not always lucky. Quite a few times De Rosa's and other gangs were intercepted by stockmen or rangers, and whenever this happened, the next day the buzzards could be seen circling.

De Rosa took quite a fancy to the Kid and extended to him the honor of active gang-membership. The Kid grinned and declined. When pressed for a reason, he was evasive, but finally modestly intimated that there was a lady in the case with whom he was loath to part for the time being. But he also said

that loves were often fleeting, and that he would feel very flattered to join such a gentlemanly aggregation of *caballeros* upon some future occasion. Whereupon they had another drink together and parted. Of course, De Rosa did not suspect that the Kid was an American, born of an American Indian mother and a half-American father, and that he was very proud of his native country.

THAT night De Rosa and his *compañeros* rode north as soon as the sun had sunk below the plain. Passing up the river a few miles so as to circle around Brownsville, they crossed to the American side and then struck out for the railroad-track. Here they pried a rail from its ties, and retiring to the edge of the chaparral which borders the right of way, sat there on their horses and smoked cigarettes as they awaited the coming of the night train.

Fifteen minutes later, when that unfortunate event happened, there was a railroad-wreck that exceeded even De Rosa's expectations and hopes. Locomotive and coaches lay in a jumbled pile, and as those of the occupants who were able came crawling out of the ruins, the riders sitting upon their horses at the edge of the chaparral began to do a little pot-shooting. They killed the engineer and fireman, a soldier who happened to be aboard, and a well-known public official. Then, yelling and still firing, they scuttled off into the darkness, and a couple of hours later had reached safety across the river. They did not do any robbing, for this job was all in fun.

It was a week after this little stunt that the Kid next saw its perpetrator. De Rosa came riding into Matamoros once more and immediately proceeded to get busy. He was not a man who could endure ennui, and wherever he chanced to be, things began to happen *pronto*. He had plenty of money; so did the Kid; and therefore they naturally gravitated together. After half a dozen drinks of mixed *mescal* and *cerveza*, De Rosa began to tell his friend all about it.

"It was a great sight, *amigo*. That locomotive, she make a hop in the air, and the cars are smashed up like so!" He held up a match to illustrate. "When

those gringos come crawling out, the shooting is pretty good by the moonlight. You should have been there to witness." The Kid turned his back, and the other did not see the look which came about his mouth and tightened it until it became a mere horizontal wrinkle.

"Why did you do it?" he asked presently. His companion grinned.

"I had heard that a lot of their cursed *soldados* were to be aboard, but it seems that I had false information. However, there are a few less of the accursed race, which is satisfaction enough, even though we got no money."

"Fine work!" mused the Kid. "When do you go again?"

"In three nights. Will you ride with us?"

"I might. And what is it to be the next time?"



"To the Rancho de la Ratama."

The Kid twisted about on his feet.

"And why there? Serre, who owns it, is of the Mexican people."

"But he has good stock and a handsome daughter. Also he has become a citizen of the other country and is now our enemy."

The Kid nodded. "I get you. I'll make the trip with you if I can—if not, I'll meet you there. What time will you arrive?"

"Shortly after moon-up. You can await us near the corral."

His companion yawned. "All right. I'll be somewhere around there. And now—*adios* and *buena suerte*."

THE next night found the Kid in the saddle and headed westward along the south branch of the Rio. The Rancho de la Ratama lay some two score miles to the west and about a dozen miles north of the river, and he made it easily enough by daybreak. Halting behind a bunch of prickly pear when he was a mile away, he dismounted and with his usual caution in such cases sat down to smoke and watch the place for a couple of hours before advancing upon it. While he was an impulsive enough person upon occasion, he had no idea of being caught in a trap if cunning could prevent it; and a two-hour watching of the place by his keen eyes should enable him to make a good guess as to whether any strangers were there. So he rolled a cigarette and patiently began his vigil.

Señor Serre, owner of the ranch, had come to the American side of the stream some thirty years before, had worked at first for others and had finally got a little start of his own. His ranch-house and outbuildings were small but well built, and he had a bunch of stock of respectable size. Outside of his daughter Anita, now arrived at full and pleasing maturity, and two Mexican helpers who lived in a bunk-house by the corral, there were no people regularly upon the place. So far, although raiders had ridden all around, he

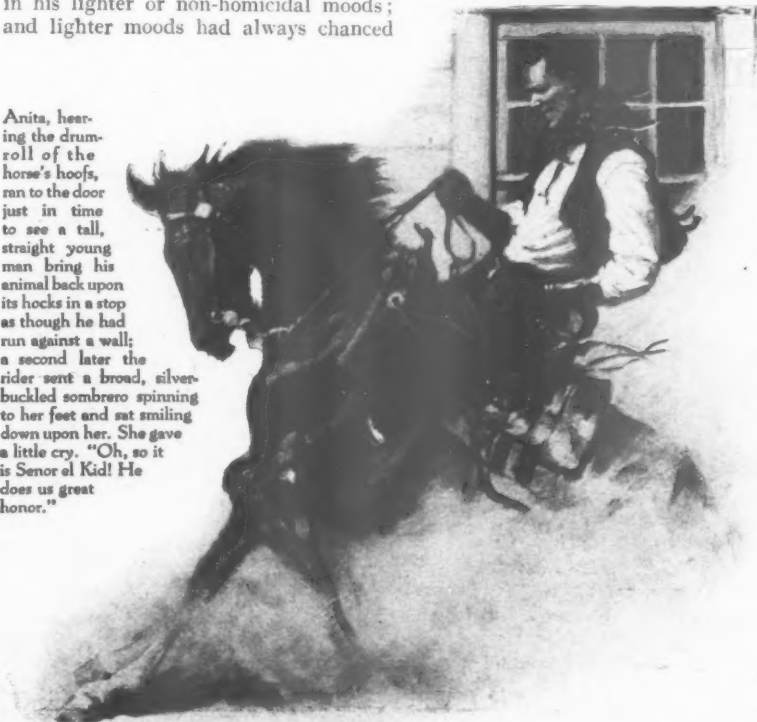
had not been disturbed, and was rather of the opinion that because of his nationality he would not be. Still, one can never be sure; and if he were—what could he do? Surely one could not keep an army to defend one's poor house; if they chose to come, he could not prevent it. Therefore he went about his business, sensibly giving little thought to the matter. He knew that in an emergency of that sort his two helpers would be utterly worthless, for their sympathies were wholly with their countrymen in the international trouble which was fomenting. Hence he must keep friendly with all and trust to the saints and good fortune. Upon a couple of occasions the Kid when riding that way had stopped overnight, and Señor Serre, caring little about the affairs of others and also knowing the danger of fooling with a centipede, had made him most welcome.

As for Anita! It must not be forgotten that the Kid was tall and straight and not bad to look upon when he was in his lighter or non-homicidal moods; and lighter moods had always chanced

to be his when he came to La Ratama. And what young woman living lonesomely upon a prairie as vast as an ocean would not be interested in a tall, straight young man who looked as though he had been cut out with a razor, a young man who could ride and shoot like *el diablo* and who was not afraid of *el diablo* himself? Surely *she* would never turn him out into the heat athirst and hungry. And besides, when such a man could play the guitar nearly as skillfully as she herself, and sing into her ear little Mexican love-songs that thrilled her! Thus it will be understood that if none but the family was at home, the Kid did not fear his welcome.

HE finished his two-hour watch; then he rose and stretched himself. All was moving as usual about the place, and he was satisfied that he could ride up without getting potted by some one concealed within. So he hopped into his saddle and burst upon the house like a

Anita, hearing the drum-roll of the horse's hoofs, ran to the door just in time to see a tall, straight young man bring his animal back upon its hocks in a stop as though he had run against a wall; a second later the rider sent a broad, silver-buckled sombrero spinning to her feet and sat smiling down upon her. She gave a little cry. "Oh, so it is Señor el Kid! He does us great honor."



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"Oh, so it is Señor el Kid! He does us great honor. Will he not alight and come within? I have fresh eggs, cold fowl and *enchiladas* most delicious!" His smile became a grin and a hungry one at that.

"Reckon I will, señorita. How is the señor?" She threw up her hands.

"It is too bad. He is in bed and cannot leave it for two days yet. From a great horse he fell. The years come upon him, and he does not ride as strongly as once." The Kid tossed his reins to the ground and dismounted.

"Sorry to hear it. Reckon I'll go in and look him over." Side by side they entered.

Señor Serre, lying in bed and helpless, held forth a hand in greeting.

"I am glad that you have come, my friend. I have been full of wishes that some one should stop over for a day or two and keep the watch for me while I am lying here helpless. I have been told that you were across the river. If so, how are our friends, the ones who ride in the night?"

The Kid slowly rolled a cigarette.

"Still able to step up to the counter and crook their elbows," he returned casually. "Still, I reckon they could do that if they were dead."

"And do you expect them to come this way again soon?"

"Hardly think so. And they aint going to bother you if they do."

Serre drew a painful breath of relief.

"It gives me delight to hear you speak such good words. I have always had the fear that some night I should be called to the door by them. And I would know what that would mean."

The other shook his head.

"They aint going to hurt you nary none. Now you roll over and go to sleep." He turned to the girl with a grin.

"I'll go out and put up my nag, and then I'll be ready for them fresh eggs, cold fowl and *enchiladas* most delicious."

ALL through the sunlit day the Kid sat with Anita in the shade of a mesquite and strummed the guitar as he sang little Mexican love-songs into her ear, while she rolled and lighted cigarettes for him, smiling and occasionally breathing soft little sighs. For never forget that he was tall and straight, that he could ride and shoot like *el diablo* himself and that all men were afraid of him even as they were of the *culebra de cascabel*. Nor was the Kid wholly unimpressed. Indifferent as a Gila monster to the general run of women, he found Anita buxom, soft and pleasing to the eye; and besides, she could cook even better than he. When evening came, they ate again; and then Anita was for having the lamp lighted, but the Kid would not listen. "Soon there will be light enough for everybody. Besides, I was thinking the other day how pretty you looked in the moonlight."

They again took their seats beneath the tree where the faint breeze from off the Gulf fifty miles away fanned their faces. Round and yellow as a gold-piece the moon rose, throwing long shadows of buildings, corral and wind-mill across the prairie, filling the air with a glow through which they looked upon things as through the thinnest of gauze. "It is beautiful, very beautiful," sighed Anita drawing a trifle closer to him. "But always it makes me feel so sad—so lonesome. And hear the coyotes salute it."

But the Kid was listening in an entirely different direction.

"Get up," he commanded tersely. "We will go inside. I hear some one coming." And the girl, whose quick ear had caught the sound of hoofs advancing through the chaparral which lay back of the house, lost no time in obeying.

STANDING side by side in the darkness of the house and watching through the window, they saw a dozen horsemen come slowly out of the chaparral and draw up before the door. The voice of De Rosa was lifted.



Had not De Ross, with his usual caution, been sitting behind two men, the council which sits in the big white tent at Washington never would have lost any more sleep over him. As it was, at the Kid's first shot one of the men who bulwarked him tumbled from the saddle like a bag of meal, and even before his body hit the ground his companion was falling on top of him.

"Ah, Señor Serre! 'Tis I, your friend from across the river. Greetings! We are thirsty and desire *agua*. Come with-out."

The Kid turned to the girl with a fierce whisper.

"Take this cartridge-belt and run in the other room and get your old man's gun. Then come out and throw yourself upon the floor right here. Do not dare move except to do what I tell you." He stepped forth upon the gallery.

"Hallo, *amigos*! I greet you. You see that I am here as promised. What little thing can I do for you?"

For a moment there was silence; then came the reply of De Rosa, slightly tinged by surprise.

"Ah, it is el Kid. But you know well enough what we come for. We want cold water."

"There's the trough out there by the windmill. No objections to your helping yourselves."

"But we also desire to see Señor Serre. Have him step out and speak with us."

"He's sick, and the medicine-man wont let him go out."

"Send the señorita."

"She's gone to bed and cannot be disturbed."

"Then we will come in and visit them."

"Wait," said the Kid in a voice as smooth as silk but with the look in his eyes of his Apache mother as she lighted the fire beneath a victim. "The cold water part of it don't go, but you've got yourselves into hot water hell-a-plenty." With a conjuring movement too quick for the eye to follow he jerked out his gun.

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Leaping sidewise with the agility of an ape and shooting as he jumped, the Kid fired his four remaining shots in an unbroken stream of sound—having the

satisfaction of seeing another man and horse go down. Then with gun pumped dry and just ahead of a hail of lead, he darted around the house and popped into the other door.

So far the affair had lasted five seconds at a liberal estimate. The Kid had done his shooting in just about two of them, and the other three had been consumed in getting under cover. Yet already three men and a horse were lying upon the ground. Later on, he apologized for not having done better by saying that they were moving pretty fast as well as he—and also that moonlight-shooting is very deceptive. De Rosa's excuse for not getting him was practically the same, plus the fact that he thought the Kid was his friend and that the latter had deceived him shamefully.

THE Kid flashed a look out of the window. The remaining horsemen were scattering around the place, shooting as they rode. Bullets were zipping and tearing through the walls in all directions. Outside, the yelling was that of a pack of fighting wolves. Men were jumping their horses with their knees, shooting, pivoting, wheeling, shooting again. The grunts of the horses and the pound of their hoofs arose sharply between the staccato gun-crashes. In the moonlight the fire-spit of the weapons was blue and the smoke invisible. But the building was entirely dark within and the raiders were blazing away at random. The Kid snatched the other revolver away from the prostrate girl and threw her his empty weapon. "Load for me," he snarled.

The Kid was once more the Kid. Within him boiled the mixed venom of the centipede, the scorpion and the black-velvet spider. The Apache and renegade blood was racing, and his eyes glowed like coals. His lips had thinned to a deadly grin, and his quickness was uncanny. He was in full action, remorseless, deadly, murderous. Darting across the room, he sent a bullet from another window and saw a horse and man go down together. With another leap he was within the next room and firing from that window, falling to the floor as the return-gust of bullets swept over

him. The hammer of his gun fell upon an exploded cartridge, and the next instant he was again at the girl's side and exchanging the empty weapon for the refilled one.

Up until now, the whole mix-up had taken about as long as has been required to read about it—perhaps a minute. Caught fairly in the moonlight and with nothing to fire at but a black house which belched death now from this window and now from that, the bandits saw that they were up against it. There was nothing to do but retreat, and this they did at the full spring of their horses, lying flat and sending back a few scattering shots as they fled—that is, all save one.

Poco Juan, having lost his horse, had taken refuge behind the windmill-house, from the corner of which he kept up a steady fire at the black building ahead. Already over a hundred bullets had plowed their way through the boards of the ranch-house, but the girl, lying flat, was unscathed; and Serre, who had rolled out of bed and also lay upon the floor, was but scraped a couple of times. As for the Kid he had escaped for two good and sufficient reasons. The first was that it was not his night to die—the second that he changed his position so rapidly that, shooting at where his gun had flashed last, the bandits hit nothing but the wrong windows. And now, with nobody left to distract him except Juan, the Kid concentrated his energies upon that individual. For a couple of seconds his gun purred; then Poco Juan reeled from behind his cover and fell prostrate.

The Kid stepped out into the moonlight, the girl at his heels. The half of

the original band that remained unhorsed were but shadowy, fleeing objects, while scattered around upon the ground were four motionless men and two who were crawling away. The Kid pointed at the latter.

"Let 'em go," he grinned. "I aint no hog." Then he added casually: "Hope they wont be fools enough to come after me."

SHE stood looking wide-eyed first at those upon the ground and then at the one who had done it. Surely this man was none other than *el diablo* himself—*el diablo*, who chose for the time being to mask himself in flesh that was tall and straight and good to look upon. Thrilled by fascination, for a moment she could do nothing but stare and stare; then with an effort she shook off the spell and laid her hand upon his arm. Her big, glistening eyes looked up into his own.

"Oh, Kid!" she cried softly. "It was wonderful—marvelous! What made you do it? Was it for my sake—for me?"

He laughed shortly, taking her cheeks between his palms.

"Anita, you're a girl after my own heart. If I was a woman's man—but I aint—and anyway, it would be a shame for you to be a widow in a few months or a year. But these are my sentiments." Bending,—and for the first and last time,—he kissed her. Then he straightened up.

"Why did I do it? Didn't them greasers shoot up a lot of good American citizens the other night?" he demanded wrathfully.

"McGinnis Was Right"

By Holworthy Hall

THERE was a man in New York Town named Johnny Devoe. And Johnny had all kinds of ability—foresight, cleverness, courage, strength, coolness—everything that makes for success in golf, business or love. But he was so confoundedly modest that he continually distrusted his own powers, with the result that he fozzled his golf, backed the wrong stocks and lost his girl—almost. For at that point he was introduced to McGinnis, and—well, you'll want to read in detail what happened then in Holworthy Hall's delightful story "McGinnis Was Right," which will appear in the August Red Book Magazine, on sale July 23rd.



White Fox Time

By Ida
M. Evans

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. L. LAMBDIN

THE REGAL FUR SHOP, which has been on State Street so long that it can almost remember when horse-cars ran along Madison Street, has four seasons all its own. They do not correspond at all to the four of the Gregorian calendar.

For August starts the Regal's year—starts it busily but dignifiedly too, as a year ought to be started. Folks who are forehanded enough and affluent enough to buy their winter coats and muffs in dog-days are, for the most part, a careful, composed, dignified, wise crowd which the sales-force of the Regal and other fur-stores respects and waits on obsequiously. Forehandedness and wisdom always command all the respect that is floating around.

As Etta Rankin, senior saleswoman of the Regal racks, crisply phrased it: "It certainly is some pleasure to wait on persons that haven't got a dyed-rabbit income with an ermine taste."

Sometime in October starts the second season of the fur year. That is when the Great Majority, which has more or less dignity, more or less affluence, more or less wisdom, leisure and manners, comes crowding, careening, crushing into the shops, on the qui vive to buy and

to wear, impetuous or anxious to be swagger and to be warm. This second is an exhausting season; even Carrie Nells, youngest, brawniest and most placid of the Regal saleswomen, has to get two cups of coffee every noon. But it is not quite so exhausting as the following third—the mad, bad January jam when the bargain-seekers, with their hunting eyes, calculating mouths, greedy shoulders and gouging elbows, pour like an avalanche over the marked-down tables and racks, grabbing muffs, clawing stoles, pawing long coats—"trying," as Maybelle Ray, glibbest of the force, was wont to sneer, "to come across a genuine sealskin marked down below the factory cost of sheepskin!"

Then, when the August buyers, having worn their purchases as long as is seemly or seasonable, have wisely put them in careful storage, and when the Great Majority have put theirs away in a closet with the winter blankets and have gone to look for a laundry that will not mangle summer things, and when the bargain-hunters are greedily haunting sport-suits counters—then comes the fourth season of the year to the Regal.

It comes along toward July—that month of sweltering days and torrid

nights, that month of crowded amusement parks, crammed beaches, busy lake steamers, crying babies, cheap cucumbers, closed churches and—perspiration and white fox.

SIMON KUZON, floor-manager of the Regal Fur Shop, did not especially notice the girl when she first came in. It was the late afternoon of the twentieth day of the hugely advertised summer white-fur sale, and for twenty days now, many, many girls had poured into the place like an invading army, burrowed deep into table and rack and then gone their ways, leaving dollars and fatigue as souvenirs of their presence. All kinds of girls—short, tall and between; homely, lovely and between; offensive, adorable and between; bony, triple-chinned and between; girls in their giggling teens, trim twenty-year-olds, sallow twenty-seven-year-olds, resigned or goo-eyed thirty-five-year-olds, fair-fat-and-forty-year-olds and hale, happy, handsome sixty-year-olds—all with a common thought and a common energy and desire!

Simon Kuzon was warm this afternoon, even to perspiring. He could feel a distinct trickle down his spine; also a minute but discommoding ring of sweat-drops threatened momentarily to appear where his lightish hair curled trimly away from the small bald spot at the center-back of his head. Twenty days before, the thermometer had begun to climb; it was still unchristianly aspiring; and the Regal shop was as stuffy as a cave-man's back-parlor. Simon's room, out on the North Side, had been stuffy the night before, so that he had lain awake most of the night; and now he was inclined, in spite of his will-power and the crowding army of customers, to give way to the sleep that he had missed. Simon was a methodical man; and any deviation from his habits smacked of the unmethodical and irritated him. All day he had been unable to forget that misspent night. And as he had sold furs for many years (and had sewed them, in a back-workroom, for several years before), he was not unnaturally a little bit weary, apart from the heat of the day, both of furs and of

the women who craved them and crowded to buy them.

So he glanced with cold indifference at the slim, small-hipped girl, a twenty-year-old in a lavender-checked dress, and with a wave of his well-kept hand indifferently directed her to a disengaged saleswoman.

Then, immediately, with the quick observation that had made and kept him a manager of sales-persons, he saw that at the moment the shop held none disengaged. Carrie Nells was busily assuring two pudgy blondes in their late thirties, sisters, apparently, that white fox is the one perfect frame for grayish-yellow hair, and they were drinking in her words as the flowers drink the dew, but studying the price-tag thoughtfully. Maybelle Ray was absorbedly adjusting a bleached rabbit cape about the chunky shoulders of a housewife in moderate circumstances, and heartily assuring her that no one, not even a sister-in-law, would ever know that it wasn't real fox. (Carrie cautiously led her customers a little farther from Maybelle's mouth.) Etta Rankin had a covey of embryonic stenographers who had hustled to the Regal as soon as business college let out, two hours before, and ever since had been sticking their calculating young necks into boa after boa, determined to get the best for the price.

"Will you be disengaged soon?" inquired Simon of his senior saleswoman. His voice, though suave,—many years had trained that voice to be suave at nearly all times,—had a tinge of disapproval. It is a clumsy saleswoman who allows herself to be claimed by the same customers for so long a time.

"I'm sure I do not know," tartly replied Miss Rankin, catching the disapproval and resenting it. Miss Rankin also was conscious of the thermometer and the humidity—the more conscious because of the covey. In two hours of busy attention to it, her usually immaculate white cuffs and collar seemed a bit wilted, and her usually neat brown hair, gray-sprinkled, had become disarranged, and not one of the jabbering girls had yet deigned to reward her pains with a purchase. Worse—all threatened

to flutter out and down the street to a rival fur-shop which also advertised.

Simon Kuzon frowned slightly. At times, he reflected, his senior saleswoman's manner was a trifle too tart to be directed toward a manager. Of course, her many years of service at the Regal—which were one or two more than his own—gave her a certain authority. But at times she was a bit too authoritative.

He glanced around sharply. Even Mattie, the youngest cash-girl, was busy; she was telling off the prices of a rack of white skins to an impatient soul in huge mother-of-pearl earrings and grass-green jersey-cloth. And Miss Bent, the overworked bookkeeper, too—she had been haled from her cage to attend to two sallow, calculating twenty-year-olds in ready-made blue serge who clutched at the fur boas as though they were clutching youth itself.

So Simon himself had to attend to the girl in the lavender-checked dress. She was accompanied by another girl. Advancing courteously to them,—in the years past, Simon Kuzon had trained courtesy, like a mask, to cover his face always in business hours,—he smiled politely and asked attentively: "What can we do for you?" But it was not too polite a smile. Any manager or salesperson will tell you that the great, pettish buying public will take instant advantage of too much politeness and tramp on you and your attentions. Simon knew the wise degree at which to stop.

His question proved to be superfluous. The girl already was darting to a rack of huge, hairy white ruffs.

"Are these the ones you advertised for four-ninety-eight?" she demanded.

A shade of distaste may have crept under the politeness of Simon Kuzon's manner. Four-ninety-eight is not a desirable sale. But it was not apparent. He concealed it nobly, although he instantly noted that the lavender-checked material of her dress was merely cotton voile, and replied: "Yes, Miss. Would you like to try one on?"

Again his words were superfluous. Miss had already peeled off her white suedette gloves and was clutching a

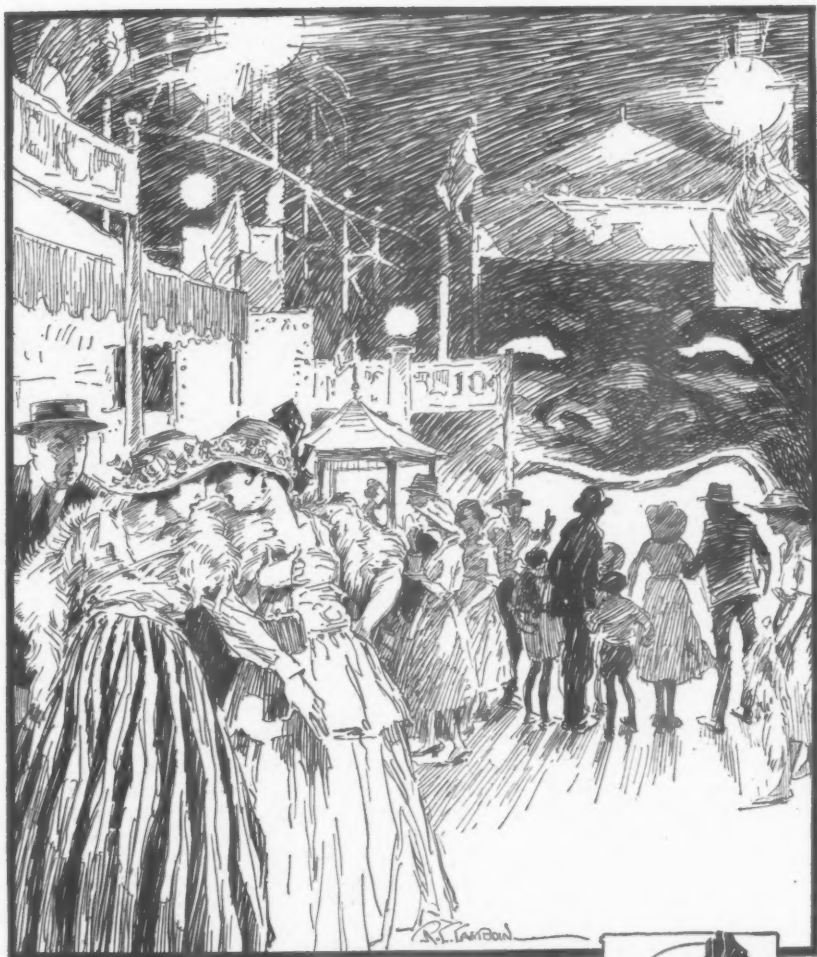
white boa around her young white neck, while her eyes, which were big and forget-me-not blue, flew to a mirror like two birds to their nest.

Simon Kuzon frowned slightly. That was no way to wear a white fur boa! The girl never could have owned one before! She wore it like a flannel muffler. Even a four-dollar-ninety-eight fur piece should be adjusted with grace and wisdom. He stepped to her and adjusted it to a more graceful looseness. "Not so snug, Miss,"—imperatively. As he adjusted it, his fingers touched her neck.

NOW, in the years past, Simon Kuzon's trim, well-kept fingers had necessarily touched many necks. One can hardly adjust a fur boa without touching the neck that it is being adjusted to. In his time, Simon Kuzon had adjusted some several thousand boas. Obviously he had beheld all varieties of necks. Some were attractive, but many were not—the scrawny, oily, chunky, brawny, red or goiteric. Not unnaturally, all kinds of necks had palled on Simon. He really, as much as possible, avoided thinking of them. He had trained himself not to mind (much) any but the greasy ones. Perhaps Simon, who was a quiet, prosaic, reserved man by nature, had overtrained in this matter; because, except as business demanded, not even the pretty, soft white necks got anything but an impersonal attention from him.

But for some inexplicable reason he was conscious of a distinctly pleasurable sensation as he touched this girl's neck rising whitely from her low-cut lavender-checked voile dress. It was a surprising sensation. It amazed Simon. He could not understand it. To be sure, her neck was soft, even velvety, and the powder on it, though strongly scented, was agreeably scented. But he had touched other necks as soft, as white and as powdered.

He looked at the girl intently. The pleasurable sensation increased. And somehow it seemed to be connected with a memory—an illusive, elusive memory that evaded him though he tried intently to lay hold of it. But with something in his past, something so pleasant that



"Say, Mame, hang onto your pocketbook," shrilly and suddenly stated one girl to the other. "There's a guy been edgin' up to us."

the indefinable memory of it cut the oppressive heat of the day like a cool wind, this girl in the lavender-checked dress was connected, he was sure. Then he was disconcerted to become conscious all at once that his fingers had been in contact with her soft neck, just below a small white ear half covered with a neatly coquettish fluff of brown hair, several seconds more than business or salesmanship required. Quickly he took his fingers away. Simon Kuzon was not a flirtatious man.

But the girl had not noticed. Her rapt blue eyes were glued on the tall pier-glass in front of her. Perhaps she would hardly have noticed if twenty sets of rude fingers were touching her neck. The white fur boa was absorbing all her capacity for attention. "Gee, isn't it scrumptious, Stella?" she satisfiedly demanded of her companion.





"Don't you go lookin' for any friend when she's with me and I've stopped to light a cigarette!" bawled the wide-shouldered young man.

"Uh-huh!" dolefully agreed Stella, who had brown eyes and was chewing gum. "Gee, I could die that I can't get me one till next pay-day, Alice."

"Oh well, that's only next week," cheerfully if a trifle selfishly observed Alice, soulfully gazing into the mirror.

"Shall we deliver it?" politely asked Simon, for once in his life regretting that a sale had not taken longer to be made.

"I should say not!" cried Alice indignantly, hugging it to her as though fearing to lose it. "I'll take it right along. I want it to wear—right to-night." She turned abruptly to Stella. "And say, Stel Johnson, believe me, if Charley Bowen aint on time to-night, I don't wait around for him like I've been doing the last three or four nights. Not a single minute will I wait—"

"Nor me for Hark," quoth her friend Stella, with indignation to match. "I told him last night it was the *last* time. Aint it the truth, though—a fellow'll treat you like dirt when he's sure of you!"

"Oh, it's the perfect truth," bitterly agreed Alice, looking on the floor for her dropped gloves. Simon Kuzon courteously picked them up for her.

"I guess maybe you and me, though, could find our way around Guna Park to-night without 'em," suggested Stella, chewing gum viciously. "Let 'em be late!"

"I just guess we can," agreed Alice threateningly. "Let 'em! I guess with a white fur boa on, a girl don't have to wander around Guna Park long without

finding some one to keep her company," —with a last satisfied glance back at the white fur in the tall mirror. They went out, talking hard. The scent of the powder used by Alice lingered, though. And somehow it seemed familiar to Simon. And the fur-shop seemed rather empty when she had gone.

As a matter of fact, the shop *was* nearly empty. The sale had taken longer than he had thought. Carrie Nells, with a weary but gracious smile and a perspiring brow, was ushering out her two pudgy blonde customers; they were pudgier in their huge white hairy purchases. Maybelle Ray, with a perspiration-streaked chin and a forced smile, had sent her housewife away quite pleased with the bleached rabbit cape, and now Maybelle was rubbing a powder-puff over her streaked countenance preparatory to her own departure for the elevated and for boarding-house leg of lamb. It was closing time. The cash-girls were jabbering tiredly around the time-clock; Mattie, the youngest, hot of face and sticky of small palms, was audibly praying the good Lord to let up on the heat. Miss Bent, frowning with fatigue, had seen her two sallow twenty-seven-year-olds stalk out and away, in search of whiter, furrier first-aid to damaged-by-age profiles, and now, back in her cage, was methodically putting her books away for the night.

Etta Rankin's covey of young business-collegians had fluttered out without purchasing, saying in pert farewell, "Guess we wont buy boas to-day," and Miss Rankin's thin, oldish face, turned after them,

expressed disappointment and jadedness. And her eyes were cross, too cross, Simon Kuzon disapprovingly reflected, for a saleswoman's; also, he reflected—though rather absently, for his own blue-eyed young customer still lingered in his mind—that in the past few weeks it had happened that Etta Rankin had missed making a good many sales. He hoped severely that she was not losing her sense of salesmanship. That was nothing for a senior saleswoman to lose in summer-sale time.

"I hoped most of those four-ninety-eights would go to-day," he observed significantly.

Miss Rankin shrugged spare, oldish shoulders till her neat black silk waist rustled irritatingly. Her lips went together in a tight, irritating line. Had she not been a senior saleswoman, you would have called it an impudently tight line.

"Well, as long as you've got eyes, you can see they didn't go," she snapped. "And I don't believe that the people who didn't buy 'em will suffer from exposure without 'em," she added, wiping her moist forehead with her handkerchief.

"It is quite warm," admitted Simon absently. What did that girl remind him of that was pleasant and—cool, it seemed?

"So some two hundred people have informed me," said Miss Rankin irritably. "I'm tired of hearing it."

Simon Kuzon gazed after her in displeasure as she turned to the hook holding her hat. Tone and manner were entirely too brusque. He had never cared

especially for Miss Rankin; and if she were developing middle-aged crabbedness, her days of usefulness were probably over.

AFTER a casual report to the little old man who owned the Regal Fur Shop, Simon Kuzon got his hat and departed too. He was glad to get out of the hot, stuffy shop.

But if the outdoors were not so stuffy, it was even hotter, he learned. The great, gold setting sun seemed to be snickering because of the caldron into which, that day, it had turned the iron-railed, building-bound Loop. Simon took off his hat and wiped the small bald part of his head. It was moist with perspiration. He thought with distaste of the small, close restaurant where he was wont to dine. He thought with more distaste of his small, trim bedroom, which faced the west and that snickering warm sun. But he thought with even greater distaste of the small club on Wilson Avenue where he occasionally went to play rum with a few men friends; and he had learned by experience that the beaches were no place for a quiet, inoffensive man to spend an agreeable evening. To-night they would be packed like a popular cafeteria. As for movies—God forbid. One might as well crawl into an oven and be done with it.

Then what should he do with the evening that stretched before him tauntingly?

Simon Kuzon was a man of few friends, of quiet tastes and of prosaically contented soul—at least, he had been



Ahead of him were three girls, arms interlocked, their necks swathed in white fur boas, their gait leisurely. But he had never seen any of the three pretty factory faces before.

hitherto. He hardly understood the restlessness that possessed him this evening, a restlessness tinged with a sudden sense of loneliness—though of course it was the heat.

Well, he sought the small restaurant and made a listless pretense of eating. Then he strolled listlessly along the street. Then he stood listlessly on a corner and gazed at the people passing. Many of them—the feminine portion—wore white fur neck-pieces, he noted absently. All this fur masqueraded as white fox, though some of it would have been ashamed to look an honest rabbit in its pink eye, let alone a real Reynard. But for once Simon Kuzon did not eye fur with a furrier's eye. He was thinking absently—

Where was Guna Park, anyway? The name of it was familiar. It had shouted at him from billboards and advertising pages, he knew. West? Come to think, he believed it was out northwest. And suddenly it occurred to him that there were many points of interest in Chicago that he had never taken the trouble to go to view. The library, the stockyards—ugh! But Guna Park—it seemed to him that it boasted a lagoon! And lagoons are cool places. The very word itself has a tinkling-ice sound. Of course he had no especial reason for going to Guna Park, but—

But on the other hand, he asked himself haughtily, had he any reason for not going? Was there any law, theory or condition that forbade him to stroll through that public place? None. And really, it was preposterous that he had never before seen the place, heralded and advertised as one of the chief amusement parks of the city of his residence. And it was entirely too warm for a man to sit in his warm room and swelter. He had not slept the night before. Probably he would not sleep to-night. And his time was his own and his actions were his own and not to be questioned by anyone of nearer tie than a landlady. For the first time in many busy, methodical, prosaic years, Simon Kuzon reflected that it had never occurred to him before that it was rather a lonesome state of affairs when there was no one to comment on your actions. Compared with

the life of most men, his had been eventless, except for the daily grind.

He asked a newsboy for directions, first going to his room to change to a drier shirt and trimmer tie.

On the way to the park, he was irritated to have to transfer twice. Simon had the usual city nerves. He did not like to transfer, and he did not like to be crushed and pawed by a great, hot transferring crowd. It seemed that the way to Guna Park was popular. Popcorn pushcarts, family parties, cheeky gangs of young men, couples and pushing boys and girls were thick at every street-corner. Simon was relieved when he finally got off the last street-car in front of the great, brilliantly lighted entrance and pushed through the turnstile. Inside he paused irresolutely. Guna Park, too, was crowded with popcorn pushcarts, family parties, roystering gangs, go-carts and couples. Simon noted that many women wore white fur neck-pieces, proving that other places besides the Regal had been profiting. He strolled past the high, spectacular fountain opposite the entrance, unobserving of its really beautiful peacock iridescence of spray. He was sharply looking about, seeking—

Without definite thought of what he was looking for, Simon Kuzon traversed one side of the brilliant oblong amusement place, skirting the Scenic Railway absently, passing the Glide of Your Life unheedingly, avoiding the barker of the Wheel of Thrills mechanically.

SUDDENLY Simon quickened his pace, so suddenly that he almost collided with a large mother of a family, all six members of which were clinging to her poplin skirt. Simon did not hear her ejaculation of rebuke—"Aintcha got no sense, knockin' a body near down?" Ahead of him were three girls, arms interlocked, their necks swathed in white fur boas, their gait leisurely. . . . But he had never seen any of the three pretty factory faces before. He strolled on indefinitely.

Then in front of a canvas tent bearing a sign in dirty black letters, **RIGO THE HUMAN SERPENT WHOSE COILS ARE DEATH** ADMISSION TEN CENTS, he

quicken his steps again. Two girls were standing there in giggling curiosity. Between low, flowered hat-brims and high-standing white fur neck-pieces, their faces could not be seen until he had gone quite close and peered.

"Say, Mame, hang onto your pocket-book," shrilly and suddenly stated one girl to the other. "There's a guy been edgin' up to us."

Simon Kuzon did not think that they could have reference to him—it was impossible. But a policeman standing near looked at him sharply, and he strolled on. He had never seen either of the girls before.

He began to think that, after all, Guna Park was a dull place. Noisy! Heavens, where did all those whistling, shrieking barkers and venders come from? Even the band seemed raucous. And the lagoon a short way off was a thing of false promise too. Cool? No noticeable coolness emanated from it. Warm, brilliant light, rankly smelling hot-dog sandwiches, and popcorn saturated with oleomargarine permeated everything. And noise! And women in white fox! But every one of them was accompanied by some one or did not care to be accompanied by anyone. What on earth was a sensible man like himself doing there? He had no business there. He had better be home in bed, sleeping so as to be fit for the next day's work. He turned to go home.

But he saw, just then, two gay, strolling couples ahead. The girls were slim and young; one had a white fur boa clutched tight about her neck; the other had none. The voice of the latter rang familiarly.

At sight of the two young men he experienced a curious sinking sensation. So Charley and Hark had been on time! But it was not Charley and Hark, and the girls' faces were not familiar, both being Slavic. Simon was so vastly relieved that he did not hear one of the girls' escorts demand belligerently of him as he stared at the white-boa-ed face of the one: "Say, watcha stoppin' to rubber at?"

Simon would not have deigned to answer had he heard. He strolled on, thinking, hoping. Now, what did he

hope, he asked himself curiously. Why on earth was he taking this interest in this Alice? He could not understand it. It was contrary to all his quiet, ordinary habits. But somehow in that lavender-checked dress she aroused some vague, pleasing memory. And that scent, too! He took off his hat to mop his warm forehead. It was certainly a pleasing memory, but he couldn't connect anything in his past with her. Nothing much but routine and business marked that past, anyway.

AS the evening wore on, the crowds at the place swelled. There was scant room to stand even on the board-walk. Simon made his way on, past the Turkish Maiden's Dance Fit for Any Man to Bring His Wife and Daughters to, past the Revolving Ride That Has Never Been Equaled for Sheer Exhilaration, past the Trained Fleas. And again he wondered what he was doing there, walking aimlessly on and on. He felt dull, he felt solitary. It seemed that he was about the only one in the place who knew no one and could talk to no one. He stopped and got a sundae. But it is silly business, eating a sundae by oneself.

That was not the reason, however, that he did not consume all of the maple-and-nut concoction. He got up hurriedly from his chair and hurriedly paid the white-robed attendant and hurriedly left the place to overtake a girl passing—a slim girl with high white heels that dug the gravel prettily, and a short white skirt that flared prettily, and a white silk tam tilted prettily so as to allow a white ear, half covered with a bit of brown hair, to appear shell-like above an encircling white fur boa. Simon darted beside her, looked hard into her eyes.

Silly Simon! It was not the girl he thought, at all. She had a wisp of a nose and a wisp of a face. Moreover, from somewhere appeared a young man with wide, pugilistic shoulders and a pugilistic fist that he immediately swung toward Simon's trim nose, attempting to follow it with an uppercut.

"I beg your pardon," angrily apologized Simon, dodging and clenching his own fist to ward off the uppercut. "I

was merely looking for a friend, and this young lady—"

"Don't you go lookin' for any friend when she's with me and I've stopped to light a cigarette!" bawled the wide-shouldered young man.

"He's a liar!" hotly said the young lady. "I never saw him before!" She gazed so scornfully at Simon that he was fairly laved with perspiration.

"I beg to inform you," he told her haughtily, returning scorn with scorn, "that you are not the friend that I was looking for!"

Ruffled in spirit, he got away from their vicinity. But when he had somewhat cooled down, he was just enough to admit that the fellow had been partially justified. He—Simon—had stepped unpleasantly close to the girl in order to look at her.

Well, he did not step unpleasantly close to any others. The whole business had begun to pall on him. He looked at his watch. Ten-thirty. Time for a sensible man to go home and get to bed. Anyway, one might as well try to find a needle in a haystack as one particular white-boa-ed face in that sea of boa-ed faces. White fox! It—and its substitutions—floated everywhere! It was more numerous than the incandescents that strung the park like a million-beaded necklace. And the faces it encircled—they were culled from every land of the globe—Gallic, Slav, Teuton, Turk, Iowan, African, almond-eyed, Irish, Parisian, Dearborn Avenue, Gary, sales-girl, suffragette, movie star and movie supe, housewife and housewife's maid—even a police-matron had succumbed to the fashion; her star gleamed under the dangling end of the boa. Simon Kuzon sighed. So many faces, but not one that he knew, not one that turned to his.

Finally he turned toward the brilliantly lighted exit. Why not?

He walked slowly, glancing from side to side, though now only a dogged sense of hating to give up impelled him to continue to look. Of course, it did not matter if he did not find this Alice. Simon Kuzon was too sensible and too prosaic a man, possibly too near middle age, to pretend to himself that his life was going to be blighted because he

hadn't found the girl. Of course, the usual routine of his existence would go right on the next day, as before. And he would take the same quiet zest in that routine—provided the heathenish thermometer dropped a decent degree or so. But—but—*what* had she reminded him of, that was freshly pleasant, but elusive as an old, forgotten perfume?

Simon's abstraction was cut—cut by distaste. Coming from the opposite direction was a large, flaxen-haired lady all in dressed-up white—white poplin gown, white shoes, white feathered hat, white fur boa, white silk gloves out of which large elbows protruded. She was alone. Seeing that Simon too was alone, she glanced at him coily. Such significant coyness of glance, at Guna Park, is pregnant with invitation. But Simon seemed to have forgotten utterly that a short time before, he was commiserating himself for his own solitariness. He glanced at the lady's double chin and walked on fast and frowningly, with the firm mien of a man bound for family fireside and no place else.

HE had almost reached the high, iridescent fountain that flung its peacock spray sparkingly over the end of the lagoon nearest the exit turnstile, when he again saw a form that brought him to a sudden halt. That end of the lagoon was furnished with a semicircle of rustic benches, and on one, her back turned to him, sat a slim, familiar person in lavender skirt, white silk blouse and white fox boa. She was alone, and one arm lay along the back of the bench rather listlessly, as she watched the passing crowd. Only the lower half of an ear was visible, between a neatly coquettish tuck of brown hair and the huge white boa. And this time there could be no doubt. That ear and that slight shoulder were too familiar to Simon Kuzon to be unknown. He advanced to her quickly. And having spent a long, baffling evening looking for her, not unnaturally by this time Simon had long before lost sight of the fact that there might be a certain degree of informality involved in walking up and claiming acquaintance with her. The search had dulled his judgment.

"Good evening!" he greeted brightly. Saleswomen of the Regal would have been surprised to hear that brisk, bright tone from the quiet, reserved Simon Kuzon. "All alone? Well, can't I—"

And then Simon Kuzon abruptly quit talking, and his jaw fell. She had turned at his greeting. And it was not the pretty Alice. Nor was it a stranger. It was his senior saleswoman—Etta Rankin. A white fur boa, it is evident, can give a pair of slight shoulders a speciously youthful appearance. And when the hat is worn low, according to the prevailing style, so that half a person's profile is concealed, and when, moreover, that person is facing away from you, so that about all of her you actually see is a lower half of an ear and a tuck of hair over it, and when the hair happens to be the same shade of brown—

"Why—why, good evening, Mr. Kuzon," said Etta Rankin politely, though she was plainly surprised. "Why—yes, I am alone,"—half apologetically. "But my room—it faces the west—was so warm that I really could not endure it for the long evening. I thought it might be cool out here, by the lagoon."

Not until some minutes later did it occur to Simon Kuzon that Miss Rankin's explanation and reply was a degree longer and several degrees more apologetic than might have been due. But he was too involved in his own thoughts to be critical. Rather flabbergasted, those thoughts were. In the first place, he was surprised, and in the second, he was confused. Between him and his senior saleswoman there had always been a certain feeling of antagonism; he had never liked her brisk, tart manner, though he admitted her ability. Now he could hardly reconcile that manner with the undeniable fact that her ear, which he had never before noticed, was quite as small and as white as the pretty Alice's! Also her face seemed to have lost some of its oldish, spare lines; against the white fur it was softer and younger. Really, she seemed like another woman than the one he had known so long. Still, he had no desire to spend the remainder of the evening with her.

Still—

SHE was looking at him rather curiously. Remembering the chirpy nature of his greeting, he felt sheepish. Never in the world would he have knowingly greeted his senior saleswoman in that style. He stood in front of her awkwardly.

She moved over on the bench—not quickly, not invitingly, but as though, since he continued to stand there, ordinary politeness bade her.

So Simon sat down. He really did not know what else to do.

"Such a hard day!" conversationally observed Miss Rankin.

"Very," politely assented Simon. "But the total of sales was excellent."

"Not mine,"—disgustingly. "But this warm weather seems to have taken my ambition. Really, I can't make myself care whether folks buy or not,"—with an apologetic little laugh.

Simon Kuzon was moved to a confession which surprised him even as he made it. "Neither do I. But—they buy!" he added with an eloquent gesture at the white-boa-ed crowd passing and repassing.

"It—it is certainly a foolish fashion," said Etta Rankin, one hand consciously playing with a snowy, bushy end of her own neck-piece. The admission was inflected with a touch of defiance and also a touch of apology.

Simon Kuzon turned and looked at her curiously. He had never before seen her face, framed in white fur. Perhaps that is why he had never before noticed that, taking it all in all, it was not an unattractive face.

"Oh, I don't know," he was moved to say slowly and meditatively and, it must be admitted, much to his own surprise. "Perhaps it is not so foolish."

Etta Rankin interrupted him. "I believe that is the girl who bought a boa from you late this afternoon—in the lilac-checked dress." She pointed carelessly.

Simon followed her pointing finger. Yes—it was Alice, giggling, white-boa-ed and clinging rapturously to the arm of a tall, round-shouldered young mechanic. Behind her was Stella, with—presumably—Hark. Simon noted absently that after all Alice was not so



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remarkably pretty—rather vapid of face, in fact, and gigglingly young and loud. Then at once he was concerned with something else than pretty Alice's face or feature. Lilac! Etta Rankin had given him the clue. Her dress was not lavender but lilac! The color distinction was slight but important. Now he had the thread to trace that baffling, elusive bit of memory. Of course! And the perfume used by her—why, of course, that was lilac too! Now he clearly and vividly remembered a day last spring when, against all wisdom, he had issued forth in a light-weight suit, leaving off his overcoat for the first time since October. And on this day, on his way to the Regal shop, he had chanced to pass flower-venders with great armfuls of lilacs. The fragrance had assailed his nostrils and had testified to the presence of spring, he recalled.

But it was perjured testimony, he recalled. For in his light suit, without his overcoat, he had shivered and cringed and almost frozen before a bitter east wind that, lilacs or no lilacs, came howling blizzardlike around the Loop. Cold! Ugh, how cold it had been that day! Small wonder that at this late day even the vague, fluttering memory of it cut the heat like a blade of refreshing chill.

Simon Kuzon wanted to laugh—at himself and at his feeble memory and at the futile evening. But after all, the evening did not seem to have been spent so futilely. Again he looked curiously at Etta Rankin beside him. Odd how that sense of antagonism toward her seemed to have slipped away. But in that white fox boa she did not seem to be the same tart person who wore the prim black waist and white collar and cuffs with which he was daily familiar.

"By the way, I certainly snapped your head half off this afternoon," she remarked contritely. "But my head was splitting—"

"Say, I didn't feel very Christian my-

self," confided Simon. "It is cooler out here by this lagoon, though."

"Decidedly," agreed she—and looked at him curiously, as though he likewise did not seem to her quite the same person as the trim, reserved man with whom she was daily familiar!

"I was about to start for home," she added. "It seems to be getting late."

"So was I," said Simon. He hesitated, and then he added frankly: "But only because it was rather slow walking around alone! I—I wonder—" His half-smile was appealing.

Above the fluffy white of Etta Rankin's fox boa crept a replying half-smile, one that likewise was deprecatory, embarrassed and appealing.

"Do you know," she admitted, "I wanted awfully bad to see those trained fleas, but I hated to go in alone."

"So did I," eagerly explained Simon. "And that Swinging Tower—"

"Oh, I'm afraid to go on that," shivered Etta Rankin.

"Nonsense!" declared Simon, tucking her arm within his own.

As they stopped to have a maple-and-nut sundae, on their way to the trained fleas, the pugilistic young man who had attempted to deliver the uppercut passed them. He eyed Simon coldly. Rather ostentatiously Simon tucked Etta Rankin's arm more closely within his own and eyed the young man haughtily and rebukingly.

And he remarked, a shade more loudly than was necessary: "Some evening this week we'll get out here earlier and take in all the attractions."

"Do you know," said Etta Rankin, as though in a burst of confidence, "you don't seem like the same man that I know in the shop."

"Don't I?" said Simon, surprised. "Did you say your room faces the west too?"—as though a bond of communion had been established between them.

"Does yours?" she cried with fervid sympathy.

There will be another story by Ida M. Evans in an early issue.

The Girl He Left Behind Him

By Eden Phillpotts

ILLUSTRATED BY
HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

A QUIET, easy-going chap was Amos Barton—a man well content to live and let live. In fact, he was the last on earth that would have left his uncle's farm and gone for a soldier at any other time than this.

But left an orphan, he had been brought up by a very clever aunt—one of the old sort with a streak of toughness in her; and seeing her nephew's fault was like to be that he'd sacrifice 'most anything for the sake of peace, she'd worked at his character in that matter and taught him that there were times when peace and self-respect couldn't drive in double harness. So it came about that when war broke upon us, Amos Barton found his aunt's teaching hold to him, and he didn't wait to be called, but offered. Indeed, he was one of the first in all St. Tid parish to throw up the land and go in the army.

Of course, in those dark days of the year 1914—which seem as far away as Noah's flood now—we none of us knew the height and depth of what the nation was in for; there was a lot of fun and chaff to the recruiting, and many thought by the time the boys were drilled and knew their job, the war would be over.

So there was plenty of laughter when we heard gentle Amos was going to the wars—a chap, mind you, that even shirked sport; for his uncle, when speaking to a few of us at The Green Man one evening, declared he could never get

his nephew to touch a gun or kill anything bigger than a wasp.

"But his sense of duty has called him to the wars," said Matthew Barton, "and though 'tis vain to think Amos can ever shine as a soldier, yet we may be sure he'll do his duty to the best of his limited powers."

Amos was Matthew's heir, you must know, if he didn't forfeit his hopes in the future.

"Why didn't he go in the Ambulance Corps?" asked Tom Chick, whose own son had also enlisted.

"He was told that what the nation wanted was fighting foot-soldiers," explained Matthew; "so a foot-soldier he'll be—though seeing how skilled he is along with horses and what a clever

His sweetheart, Lucy Vale, felt a good bit put about when Amos joined up. She reckoned Amos ought to have considered her feeling first.



touch he has to tame 'em, I think he'd do more good in the cavalry myself."

BUT Amos wasn't a hero in one pair of eyes by any means, and it came out presently that his sweetheart, Lucy Vale, felt a good bit put about when he joined up. She didn't wish it, and she reckoned Amos ought to have considered her feeling first. For people began to say that quite enough young men had volunteered for the new armies; and so Lucy, who knew Amos was a peaceful, soft-hearted chap by nature, felt he'd never shine at the front, or be a credit to her or anybody.

"Good powers!" she said to Amos. "What would a man like you do in battle? Your one thought would be to hurt nobody, and you'd stop to say you were sorry if you trod on anybody's toes—let alone run a bayonet into them. You'll only disgrace yourself, and if you hear a shot fired in anger, such a tender creature as you will lose your nerve altogether and very likely run away."

"I'm sorry you feel like that, Loo," said Amos to her; "and I hope you're mistaken. I hate the thoughts of war, and I aint ashamed to say it; but I don't think I should be frightened, because if a man's doing his duty, there's no room for him to be frightened."

She kept at him, however, and made it a bit painful for Amos; but she didn't change his mind, and once he was in khaki, of course she could do nothing. The

change dated from then, however, and there's no doubt Lucy Vale never felt quite the same toward Amos after he joined the colors. She was a very fine figure of a girl, with red hair and a complexion like a wild rose; but she

had no large ideas and couldn't look much farther ahead than her own interests. For that matter, that's the limit of more eyes than Lucy's.

So when she'd made a rare good match for a poor widow's daughter and won Amos Barton, she little liked to think she might lose him again, and she didn't give the man any credit for his sacrifice, but blamed him for it instead. And perhaps what troubled her as much as anything was that Amos withstood her; for he'd never denied her before, and she was already thinking in her heart that the gray mare would be the better horse when they came to wed.

HOWEVER, Lucy hid her mind, and

I dare say it would have been all right, as more and more joined up. Indeed, before long, Lucy might have been the first to grumble if she'd been called to go out walking with a civilian. But

there was another in it; and when

young Jacob Warner, the game-

keeper, found that Lucy was a bit under the weather about Amos, he took very good care for his own ends to harp on it and make out a black case against the girl's betrothed.

He was a big, fine fellow, to the eye, but he hadn't no use whatever for the war, and he let his

master apply for him—and the

Tribunal gave him

six months, not for his own sake, but for Squire Trecarrow's.

And when Amos was fairly off to France, Master Jacob began

his games with Lucy.

What went on between them nobody ever knew; but by reason of his calling, a gamekeeper's a chap that can amuse himself out of sight of other people, and there's no doubt Lucy often met



But he found Lucy Vale in rather a haughty spirit. To be plain, she told him to mind his own business.

Jacob by appointment and listened to his nonsense.

She was weak but not wicked, and she didn't think she was doing wrong to listen to Jacob's love-making, more especially as she didn't feel none too forgiving to Amos for joining up. But we couldn't believe that she meant more than to amuse herself; and so Tom Chick, who was a friend of Amos Barton, decided he'd speak to Lucy. He was a middle-aged man and had got a good few daughters of his own, so he felt he could say the word in season.

But he found Lucy Vale in rather a haughty spirit. To be plain, she told him to mind his own business. And then came the amazing thing: for suddenly two matters fell out simultaneously—we heard that Lucy had thrown over Amos and was tokened to the gamekeeper, and next we heard that Amos himself, who had now been in the trenches for six months, was getting a bit of leave and returning home to his uncle and aunt.

Leave comes along by chance when it can, you see, and a man doesn't know much beforehand when he is to get back; so it fell out that Lucy's letter to Amos, telling him she'd changed her mind, never reached him, and the first he heard about the adventure was at the railway station, where Tom Chick went to meet him.

HE found Amos changed and yet the same. He was thinner, but a mighty lot harder; his gentle eyes had taken a different expression, and there'd come a sharp line between them. His voice was different too, and him that had gone to the wars a kindly boy came back a man, and one that knew his own mind, be sure. He had come through without a scratch and seen some properly awful service. He'd killed men with his own weapons, and hoped to kill more and wasn't ashamed to say so. His outlook on life was altered by the horrors that life had shown him, and he told Tom that he'd never known the meaning of reality before he went to France.

That gave Tom his chance.

"There's a bit of reality waiting here for you all the same," he said, "and I'm

very sorry to say it's in the shape of some proper bad news."

"Not Aunt or Uncle?" asked Amos.

"No, they're all right."

"Lucy, then? She ought to be here to meet me."

Then Tom told him that Lucy had gone over to Jacob Warner, that the thing had been done not a fortnight before and that there probably was a letter waiting in France that minute with the fatal news. Knowing the gentle nature of Amos, Chick feared he'd be properly torn to pieces by this fearful mishap; but the outward change had crept to the inner man also, as it seemed. Anyway, Amos didn't take on much to the eye. When he heard who the other man was, he just gave a short laugh and bade Tom Chick come along with him to The Green Man and have a drink. He'd got a very fine German helmet as a trophy, and in ten minutes he was showing it to a dozen men in the bar of the inn and getting a lot of congratulations from his old acquaintances.

They found the change in him, too; for the work his hand had been called to perform was reflected not only in his voice and his eyes but in his manner of looking at things and in his opinions. He didn't show off or talk big, for nothing could have made him do that; but it was plain to the least observing that life had lifted Amos into a pretty keen blade. He didn't contradict or argue about the war, but he just told them, and he made it exceeding clear that the old world and the old interests and amusements—the farm work and the quarry work and the chapel teas and so on—had all took another place in his mind from what they did before the war. He didn't scorn nothing or laugh at anybody; yet there was the far-reaching change in him, and the home-staying people who saw and heard felt it and knew that Amos had got to be a leader of men and one whose word did ought to be respected and obeyed. For that matter, he had risen from private to sergeant in six months, and the stripes were on his arm.

Nobody touched on the man's great misfortune, though it was common knowledge by now; and then by chance,

She was we



HEDLEY
MORLEY
1894

She was weak but not wicked, and she didn't think she was doing wrong to listen to Jacob's love-making, more especially as she didn't feel none too forgiving to Amos for joining up.

who should saunter into the bar, with his gun under his arm, but Jacob Warner the keeper! The people fairly held their breath.

Then they saw a remarkable scene.

"HULLO, Jacob! How's yourself?" asked Amos.

"I'm all right," answered the other, but he showed an inclination to be off and away that instant moment.

"Shake hands, and don't you go. I want to speak to you," said Amos, and the other put a bold face on it and shook hands and set down his gun.

"Still shooting rabbits instead of Germans, I see," remarked Amos.

"The world's work can't stand still for the war," answered Jacob, lofty-like.

"The world's work!" Are you a rabbit yourself? "The world's work!" Much you know of the world's work, you hulking great zany!"

Jacob stood three inches taller than Amos and was a broader, bigger, heavier man; but he looked a loose-built, shambling sort of figure against the soldier; his voice hadn't the same clean ring in it; and his words didn't carry weight like the smaller man's—which was natural because, of course, Jacob stood in the wrong and Amos had right behind him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the keeper.

"I'll tell you," answered Amos. "The matter with me is that I've just heard my girl, in a passing fit of weak-mindedness, have thought that you was better like to suit her as a husband than what I shall. And that means that you've been messing about after her when you ought to have been doing your master's work. So you can't even be trusted to shoot rabbits, seemingly. And now you're up against it, and I've got to knock this tomfoolery out of your head and out of hers afore I go to sleep to-night. And I'm going to do it."

"How?" asked Jacob. But he'd got his tail down already.

"I'll show you how. When you're a soldier, you learn to make up your mind double quick, for your life often hangs on it. And my life hangs on Lucy Vale,

for that matter, as the baggage very well knows. So now you drink your beer and come along with me."

"And if I don't?"

"There's no don't about it. I've had to handle your sort a dozen times under enemy's fire, Jacob Warner, and if I could do it there, I can do it here. You're dust to me—*dust*, I tell you—in will and strength and everything. I'm ashamed to waste words on a slack-twisted, good-for-nothing lout like you. You've got to march along with me to Widow Vale's house and tell Lucy you've been a wicked young fool. And you can take off that cap and put on this German helmet. It came off the head of a braver man than you—so you needn't be ashamed of it."

JACOB threw his eyes around to find a friend; but of the dozen-odd men in the bar at that minute, not one was on his side. He blustered and cursed a good bit; but Amos was hard as a rock, and as Tom Chick said after, you felt he'd got a bit of the tiger-tamer in him at that moment and was good to handle man or beast. There weren't much of the tiger in Jacob Warner, whether or no; and before you could rub your eyes, the battle of wills was over, and there stood the keeper with a dead German's helmet on his head.

"Shoulder arms!" said Amos, and Jacob had to put his gun over his shoulder, though he'd liked to have emptied both barrels into his enemy if he'd dared.

But he was a lost man afore the other, and there was a proper terrified look in his face as he went out and down the street. He pretended afterward he thought Amos was mad. Barton let up a little then, and as we crowded to the door to see 'em go, we marked that he didn't drive the keeper in front of him as if he'd took a prisoner, but just walked in a friendly way by his side and talked as if there weren't a shadow between them. Leastways, he did the talking, for Jacob was dumb.

Then they went to Widow Vale's cottage, and it was Lucy's turn.

She came out to the door when Amos knocked, and afore she knew it, she was in his arms with a kiss on each

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the ti



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cheek. Then he spoke afore she'd time to faint.

"Here I am, you see, never better and in the pink, my dear. And I'm sorry to find that you and Jacob here have been playing at some sort of naughty pretense behind my back, like a couple of silly children. But I forgive you, because it's all make-believe here at home, and your betters are just as bad as you. But I've woke Jacob up, and he's come to say he's sorry for his sins; and I hope you'll forgive him as you'd wish to be forgiven yourself by me for such bad conduct. Now speak, Jacob, and then you can sling your hook."

He talked as calmly as ever; but the pair knew there was a force behind that was far beyond their power to cope with.

Jacob cut a poor show before Lucy. He couldn't bluff and he couldn't talk big, with a dead German's helmet on his head and a dozen school-children peeping over the garden wall; so he did the wisest thing—threw up the sponge and felt that least said, soonest mended.

"You hear Amos," said Jacob, "and that's all there is to it, Lucy. He's come home like a regiment of soldiers all in one man, and he will be obeyed, and he don't regard our engagement as binding and—"

Lucy looked at him and then at Amos, standing there like the figure of doom, and she saw the new power that had cast Jacob in the dust. For a moment she thought of putting her will against his, and perhaps if Jacob had put up a fight, she'd have helped him; but seeing him down and out, as you may say, and the other so calm and resolute, she felt in a flash what a cruel mistake she'd made.

THEN Amos took his helmet off Jacob's head and bade him begone, but all quite pleasant without a spark of anger. And when the gamekeeper had



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disappeared, the steadfast soldier went into Lucy Vale's house. Her mother was out, and they had it to themselves, and then she got a taste of the new Amos Barton. He listened to her shamefaced talk, like a father listens to a child caught out in a naughty deed, and he pardoned her; then he said his say:

"I forgive you very willing, Lucy, but a thing like this have got to leave its mark, and 'tis no good your crying out, because I shouldn't hear you if you did. My ears don't take no account of much less than a Jack Johnson nowadays. Jacob couldn't have been wicked if you hadn't helped him; and now you're going to catch it too."

She doted on his firmness and felt like kneeling down and kissing his boots by that time. But with all the will to please him and the thankfulness to be forgiven, she was more than a bit shaken

up when she heard what he said next:

"On Sunday next we'll go to chapel as usual, my dear, and sit side by side and sing out of the same book. And you'll wear this here helmet instead of your go-to-meeting hat. 'Tis an officer's helmet and will look very fine on your brave red hair. And that's not all, neither. I've got a fortnight before I return to France. And during that fortnight two things will happen to me: I shall receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal, known as the D. C. M. for shortness, and I shall marry Lucy Vale. That's where we stand. And now you can give me a kiss and sit on my knee for a bit and tell me you feel thankful to God that you're going to marry a man after all."

He stopped with her for half an hour, and such was the potent force of him, and the look in his eyes, and the way he held her to him and rubbed his lean cheek against her round one, that Lucy never even argued about it.

HE went off to his relations presently and never even reminded Lucy about the helmet. But he let her choose the wedding-day, and when he came to fetch her to worship the next Sunday, she was wearing the helmet, all right. But she'd softened it down with a bit of flimsy, and he made no objection to that. In fact, he never mentioned the subject again, either then or ever after.

They were married so soon as possible and then went to London for a few days, on one of which Amos visited Buckingham Palace and got his medal from His Majesty's own hand.

'Twas a nine days' wonder, you may say; and before he returned to fight, Tom Chick asked Amos how it came about that such an easy chap could take such a high hand and sweep

terrible real that it makes everyday life at St. Tid a dream by comparison. Out there all the senses play such a part as never before were they called to play. They're lifted up and increased, and you feel that you've only been half alive before. You hear and you see and you smell and you touch—and you taste too—in a way you can't imagine if you haven't been there. Your feet turn into ice under you; your blood runs out of your ears and nose for nothing but the noise. Everything's in deadly extremes. Tom Chick; and after you've had a spell of it, you find you take a new view of life in general. And coming back from the front to all you peaceful people, and such mice as Jacob Warner, I feel that—no disrespect to you, Chick—you're all tame cats, or grown-up children, just fiddling on with your silly little lives and thinking your silly little thoughts and doing your silly little actions.

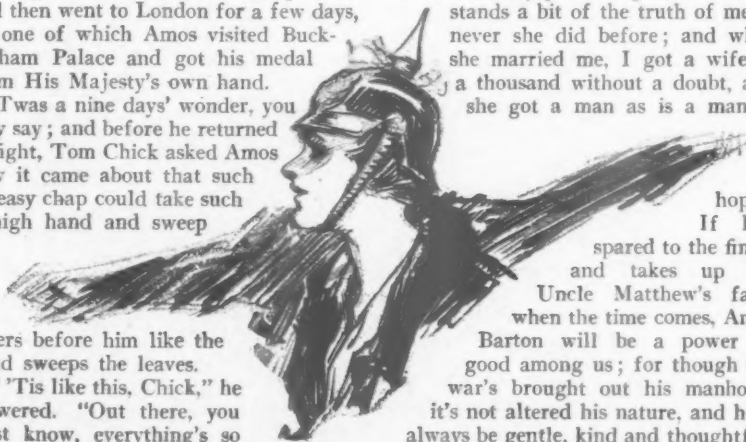
"And I was the same," added Amos. "But I shall never sink down into the same again if I'm spared to come through the fighting. And for the minute, being strung up, as you may say, to see things with the eyes of the great war, 'twas nothing to me to handle Jacob as I did, and Lucy as I did. I've give 'em both a pinch of reality. And what's the result? Why, that hulking game-keeper is off to the wars himself, and a very fine soldier he'll make, no doubt; while as for my precious girl, she understands a bit of the truth of me as never she did before; and when she married me, I got a wife in a thousand without a doubt, and she got a man as is a man, I

hope."

If he's spared to the finish and takes up his Uncle Matthew's farm when the time comes, Amos Barton will be a power of good among us; for though the war's brought out his manhood, it's not altered his nature, and he'll always be gentle, kind and thoughtful.

others before him like the wind sweeps the leaves.

"'Tis like this, Chick," he answered. "Out there, you must know, everything's so



Baree whined. His own ears were up, his head alert, his tail aloft and bushy.

A Son of Kazan

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK B. HOFFMAN



*(What Happened in the Opening
Installments:)*

BAREE was the son of Kazan—the formidable wolf-dog who had once killed a man in defense of his mistress and who had finally gone back to the wild—and of Gray Wolf, Kazan's blind wolf mate. When Baree was only nine weeks old he wandered away from the wilderness den where he had been born, and falling into a forest stream after a fight with a young owl, clambered out on the other side—and so failed to find his way home.

For some time little Baree kept himself alive by catching crawfish along the stream. And then came his first contact with man. For he wandered into the domain of Pierrot the trapper, who, since the death of the Indian princess who had been his wife, had lived alone with his beautiful daughter Nepeese.

Nepeese fired at Baree, but a sapling deflected the bullet, and he escaped with only a flesh-wound. And his dog-like yelp of pain as he ran off told them he was no true wolf. But Baree had learned to fear man.

Rapidly Baree grew in size and strength, and in acquaintance with the other forest creatures—with Umisk the

beaver and Wakayoo the bear and all the others. And then his real association with mankind began.

For Bush McTaggart, the fur company's factor in that region, and a powerful, unscrupulous man, had seen Nepeese and desired her—for he had wearied of Marie, the Indian girl who had been keeping house for him. Therefore McTaggart had set out for Pierrot's cabin to demand Nepeese.

Camping the night before his arrival, McTaggart set some wire snares in order to catch a rabbit for his breakfast. Baree happened along that way, ran his head into one of the snares and found himself caught. So McTaggart found him, and recognizing the dog strain in him, did not shoot him but beat him almost unconscious—and took him along, wrapped in a blanket, to Pierrot's cabin.

When McTaggart appeared carrying Baree, Nepeese gave a cry of pity, and snatching the maltreated pup from the Factor, she fled with him into the cabin. There Nepeese dressed Baree's wounds and won his friendship; and when McTaggart entered the cabin, Baree promptly bit him.

McTaggart asked for Nepeese. The girl had begged permission to answer him herself, and in pretended coquetry ran outside and drew him after her into



By
James Oliver
Curwood

A new novel of the Great Outdoors by the
author of "Kazan" and "The Grizzly."

the woods. So she lured him to the cliff over a pool twenty feet below—and gave him his answer by pushing him in.

The Factor barely escaped from the pool with his life. Shortly thereafter he found that blood poisoning had followed Baree's bite, and in terror he started off back to his home at Lac Bain. Meanwhile Nepeeese had fled into the woods with Baree. And after the Factor's departure, she returned to the cabin. Soon afterward MacDonald, a government map-maker, visited Pierrot and takes a photograph of Nepeeese.

(The story follows in detail.)

CHAPTER XVII

BACK to Lac Bain, late in September, came MacDonald the map-maker. For ten days Gregson, the investigating agent, had been Bush McTaggart's guest at the post, and twice in that time it had come into Marie's mind to creep upon him while he slept and kill him. The Factor himself paid little attention to her now, a fact which would have made her happy if it had not been for Gregson. He was enraptured with the wild, sinuous beauty of the Cree girl, and McTaggart encouraged him.

McTaggart told Gregson this. He wanted to get rid of her, and if he—Gregson—could possibly take her on with him it would be a great favor. He

explained why. A little later, when the deep snows came, he was going to bring the daughter of Pierrot to the post.

It was at this time that MacDonald came. He remained only one night, and without knowing that he was adding fuel to a fire already dangerously blazing, he gave the photograph he had taken of Nepeeese to the Factor.

"If you can get it down to that girl some day I'll be mightily obliged," he said to McTaggart. "I promised her one. Her father's name is DuQuesne—Pierrot DuQuesne. You probably know them. And the girl—"

His blood warmed as he described to McTaggart how beautiful she was.

The next day MacDonald started for Norway House. McTaggart did not show Gregson the picture. A scheme had been in his mind for weeks—and the picture determined him. He dared not whisper his secret even to Gregson. But it was the one way. It would give him Nepeeese. Only—he must wait for the deep snows, the midwinter snows. They buried their tragedies deepest.

McTaggart was glad when Gregson followed the map-maker to Norway House. Out of courtesy he accompanied him a day's journey on his way. When he returned to the post, Marie was gone. He was glad. He sent off a runner with a load of presents for her people, and the message: "Don't beat her. Keep her. She is free."

Along with the bustle and stir of the beginning of the trapping-season, McTaggart began to prepare his house for the coming of Nepeese. He knew what she liked in the way of cleanliness and a few other things. He had the log walls painted white with the lead and oil that were intended for his York boats. Certain partitions were torn down, and new ones were built; the Indian wife of his chief runner made curtains for the windows, and he confiscated a small phonograph that should have gone on to Lac La Biche. He had no doubts, and he counted the days as they passed.

DOWN on the Gray Loon, Pierrot and Nepeese were busy at many things, so busy that at times Pierrot's fears of the Factor at Lac Bain were forgotten, and they went out of the Willow's mind entirely. It was

the Red Moon,
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A
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They could hear its swift
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excitement of the winter hunt. Nepeese carefully dipped a hundred traps in boiling caribou-fat mixed with beaver-grease, while Pierrot made fresh dead-falls ready for setting on his trails. When he was gone more than a day from the cabin, she was always with him.

But at the cabin there was much to do, for Pierrot, like all his Northern brotherhood, did not begin to prepare until the keen tang of autumn was in the air. There were snowshoes to be re-webbed with new *babiche*; there was wood to be cut in readiness for the winter storms; the cabin had to be banked, a new harness made, skinning-knives sharpened and moccasins for the winter manufactured—a hundred and one affairs to be attended to, even to the repairing of the meat-rack at the back of the cabin, where, from the beginning

of cold weather until the end, would hang the haunches of deer, caribou and moose for the family larder and, when fish were scarce, the dogs' rations.

In the bustle of all this, Nepeese was compelled to give less attention to Baree than during the preceding weeks. They did not play so much; they no longer swam, for with the mornings there was deep frost on the ground, and the water was turning icy cold; they no longer wandered deep in the forest after flowers and berries. For hours at a time Baree would now lie at the Willow's feet, watching her slender fingers as they weaved swiftly in and out with her snowshoe *babiche*; and now and then Nepeese would pause to lean over and put her hand on his head and talk to him for a moment—sometimes in her soft Cree, sometimes in English or her father's French.

It was the Willow's voice which Baree had learned to understand, and the movement of her lips, her gesture, the poise of her body, the changing moods which brought shadow or sunlight into her face. He knew what it meant when she smiled; he shook himself, and often jumped about her in sympathetic rejoicing, when she laughed; her happiness was a part of him—a stern word from her was worse than a blow. Twice Pierrot had struck him, and twice Baree had sprung back and faced him with bared fangs and an angry snarl, the crest along his back standing up like a brush. Had one of the other dogs done this, Pierrot would have half killed him. It would have been mutiny, and the man must be master. But Baree was always safe. A touch of the Willow's hand, a word from her lips, and the crest slowly settled and the snarl went out of his throat.

Pierrot was not at all displeased.

"*Dieu!* I will never go so far as to try and whip that out of him," he told himself. "He is a barbarian—a wild beast—and her slave. For her he would kill!"

So it came, through Pierrot himself,—and without telling his reason for it,—that Baree did not become a sledge-dog. He was allowed his freedom, and was never tied, like the others. Nepeese was glad, but did not guess the thought that was in Pierrot's mind. To himself Pierrot chuckled. She would never know why he kept Baree always suspicious of him, even to the point of hating him. It required considerable cunning on his part. He reasoned:

"If I make him hate me, he will hate all men. *Mey-oo!* That is good."

So he looked into the future—for Nepeese.

NOW the tonic-filled days and cold, frosty nights of the Red Moon brought about the big change in Baree. It was inevitable. Pierrot knew that it would come, and the first night that Baree settled back on his haunches and howled up at the Red Moon, Pierrot prepared Nepeese for it.



"He is a wild dog, *ma Ne-peese*," he said to her. "He is half wolf, and the Call will come to him strong. He will go into the forests. He will disappear at times. But we must not fasten him. He will come back. *Ka*, he will come back!" And he rubbed his hands in the moon-glow until his knuckles cracked.

The Call came to Baree like a thief entering slowly and cautiously into a forbidden place. He did not understand it at first. It made him nervous and uneasy, so restless that Nepeese frequently heard him whine softly in his sleep. He was waiting for something. What was it? Pierrot knew, and smiled in his inscrutable way.

And then it came. It was night, a glorious night filled with moon and stars, under which the earth was whitening with a film of frost, when they heard the first hunt-call of the wolves. Now and then during the summer there had come the lone wolf-howl, but this was the tonguing of the pack; and as it floated through the vast silence and mystery of the night, a song of savagery that had come with each Red Moon down through unending ages, Pierrot knew that at last had come that for which Baree had been waiting.

In an instant Baree had sensed it. His muscles grew taut as pieces of stretched rope as he stood up in the moonlight, facing the direction from

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which floated the mystery and thrill of the sound. They could hear him whining softly; and Pierrot, bending down so that he caught the light of the night properly, could see him trembling.

"It is *Mee-Koo*," he said in a whisper to Nepeese.

That was it, the call of the blood that was running swift in Baree's veins—not alone the call of his species, but the call of Kazan and Gray Wolf and of his forbears for generations unnumbered. It was the voice of his people. So Pierrot had whispered, and he was right. In the golden night the Willow was waiting, for it was she who had gambled most, and it was she who must lose or win. She uttered no sound, replied not to the low voice of Pierrot, but held her breath and watched Baree as he slowly faded away, step by step, in the shadows. In a few moments more he was gone. It was then that she stood straight and flung back her head, with eyes that glowed in rivalry with the stars.

"Baree!" she called. "Baree! Baree! Baree!"

He must have been near the edge of the forest, for she had drawn a slow, waiting breath or two before he was back at her side. But he had come, straight as an arrow, and he whined up into her face. Nepeese put her hands to his head.

"You are right, *mon père*," she said. "He will go to the wolves, but he will come back. He will never leave me for long." With one hand still on Baree's head, she pointed with the other into the pitlike blackness of the forest. "Go to them, Baree!" she whispered. "But you must come back. You must. *Cheamao*!"

With Pierrot she went into the cabin; the door closed behind them, and Baree was alone. There was a long silence. In it he could hear the soft night-sounds: the clinking of the chains to which the dogs were fastened, the restless movement of their bodies, the throbbing whirl of a pair of wings, the breath of the night itself. For to him this night, even in its stillness, seemed alive. Again he went into it, and close to the forest once more, he stopped to listen. The wind had turned, and on it rode the wailing, blood-thrilling cry of the pack.

Far off to the west a lone wolf turned his muzzle to the sky and answered that gathering-call of his clan; and then out of the east came a voice, so far beyond the cabin that it was like an echo dying away in the vastness of the night.

A choking note gathered in Baree's throat. He threw up his head. Straight above him was the Red Moon, inviting him to the thrill and mystery of the open world. The sound grew in his throat, and slowly it rose in volume until his answer was rising to the stars. In their cabin Pierrot and the Willow heard it. Pierrot shrugged his shoulders.

"He is gone," he said.

"*Oui*, he is gone, *mon père*," replied Nepeese, peering through the window.

CHAPTER XVIII

NO longer, as in the days of old, did the darkness of the forests hold a fear for Baree. This night his hunt-cry had risen to the stars and the moon, and in that cry he had, for the first time, sent forth his defiance of night and space, his warning to all the wild, and his acceptance of the Brotherhood. In that cry, and the answers that came back to him, he sensed a new power—the final triumph of nature in impinging on him the fact that the forests and the creatures they held were no longer to be feared, but that all things feared him. Off there, beyond the pale of the cabin and the influence of Nepeese, were all the things that the wolf-blood in him found now most desirable: companionship of his kind, the lure of adventure, the red, sweet blood of the chase—and matehood. This last, after all, was the dominant mystery that was urging him, and yet least of all did he understand it.

He ran straight into the darkness to the north and west, slinking low under the bushes, his tail drooping, his ears aslant—the wolf, as the wolf runs on the night trail. The pack had swung due north, and was traveling faster than he, so that at the end of half an hour he could no longer hear it. But the lone wolf-howl to the west was nearer, and three times Baree gave answer to it.

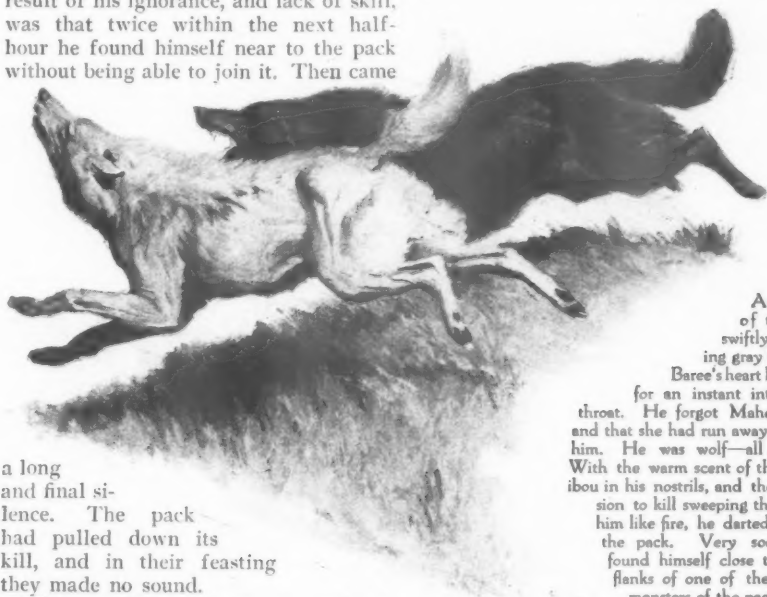
At the end of an hour he heard the pack again, swinging southward. Pier-

rot would easily have understood. Their quarry had found safety beyond water, or in a lake, and the *muhekuns* were on a fresh trail. By this time not more than a quarter of a mile of the forest separated Baree from the lone wolf, but the lone wolf was also an old wolf, and with the directness and precision of long experience, he swerved in the direction of the hunters, compassing his trail so that he was heading for a point half or three quarters of a mile in advance of the pack.

This was a trick of the Brotherhood which Baree had yet to learn; and the result of his ignorance, and lack of skill, was that twice within the next half-hour he found himself near to the pack without being able to join it. Then came

and whined, and always he picked out accurately the direction in which the cabin lay. But he did not turn back. As the night lengthened, his search for that mysterious something which he had not found continued. His hunger, even with the fading-out of the moon and the coming of the gray dawn, was not sufficiently keen to make him hunt for food.

It was cold, and it seemed colder when the glow of the moon and stars died out. Under his padded feet, especially in the open spaces, was a thick white frost in which he left clearly at times the imprint of his toes and claws. He had



a long and final silence. The pack had pulled down its kill, and in their feasting they made no sound.

The rest of the night Baree wandered alone, or at least until the moon was well on the wane. He was a long way from the cabin, and his trail had been an uncertain and twisting one, but he was no longer possessed with the discomforting sensation of being lost. The last two or three months had been developing strongly in him the sense of orientation, that "sixth sense" which guides the pigeon unerringly on its way and takes a bear straight as a bird might fly to its last year's denning-place.

Baree had not forgotten Nepee. A dozen times he turned his head back

traveled steadily for hours, a great many miles in all, and he was tired when the first light of the day came. And then there came the time when, with a sudden sharp click of his jaws, he stopped like a shot in his tracks.

AT last it had come—the meeting with that for which he had been seeking. It was in an open, lighted by the cold dawn—a tiny amphitheater that lay on the side of a ridge, facing the east. With

At sight of those swiftly moving gray bodies Baree's heart leaped for an instant into his throat. He forgot Mahegun, and that she had run away from him. He was wolf—all wolf. With the warm scent of the caribou in his nostrils, and the passion to kill sweeping through him like fire, he darted after the pack. Very soon he found himself close to the flanks of one of the gray monsters of the pack.



her head toward him, and waiting for him as he came out of the shadows, his scent strong in her keen nose, stood Maheegun, the young wolf. Baree had not scented her, but he saw her directly he came out of the rim of young balsams that fringed the open. It was then that

he stopped, and for a full minute neither of them moved a muscle or seemed to breathe.

There was not a fortnight's difference in their age, and yet Maheegun was much the smaller of the two; her body was as long as his, but slimmer; she stood



WHEN Baree joined the pack, a maddened, mouth-frothing, snarling horde, Napemoos, the young caribou bull, was well out in the river and swimming steadily for the opposite shore.

laxed, and in a direct ratio as he drew nearer, her ears lost their alertness and dropped aslant.

Baree whined. His own ears were up, his head alert, his tail aloft and bushy. Cleverness, if not strategy, had already become a part of his masculine superiority, and he did not immediately press the affair. He was within five feet of Maheegun when he casually turned away from her and faced the east, where a faint penciling of red and gold was heralding the day. For a few moments he sniffed and looked around and tested the wind with much seriousness, as though impressing on his fair acquaintance—as many a two-legged animal has done before him—his tremendous importance in the world at large.

And Maheegun was properly impressed. Baree's bluff worked as beautifully as the bluffs of the two-legged animals. He sniffed the air with such thrilling and suspicious zeal that Maheegun's ears sprang alert, and she sniffed it with him; he turned his head from point to point so sharply and alertly that her feminine curiosity, if not anxiety, made her turn her own head in questioning

on slender legs that were almost like the legs of a fox, and the curve of her back was that of a slightly bent bow, a sign of swiftness almost equal to the wind. She stood poised for flight even as Baree advanced his first step toward her, and then very slowly her body re-

conjunction; and when he whined, as if in the air he had caught a mystery which she could not possibly understand, a responsive note gathered in her throat, but smothered and low as a woman's exclamation when she is not quite sure whether she should interrupt her lord or

not. At this sound, which Baree's sharp ears caught, he swung up to her with a light and mincing step, and in another moment they were smelling noses.

WHEN the sun rose, half an hour later, it found them still in the small open on the side of the ridge, with a deep fringe of forest under them, and beyond that a wide, timbered plain which looked like a ghostly shroud in its mantle of frost. Up over this came the first red glow of the day, filling the open with a warmth that grew more and more comfortable as the sun crept higher.

Neither Baree nor Maheegun was inclined to move for a while, and for an hour or two they lay basking in a cup of the slope, looking down with questing and wide-awake eyes upon the wooded plain that stretched away under them like a great sea.

Maheegun, too, had sought the hunt-pack, and like Baree had failed to catch it. They were tired, a little discouraged for the time and hungry—but still alive with the fine thrill of anticipation, and restlessly sensitive to the new and mysterious consciousness of companionship. Half a dozen times Baree got up and nosed about Maheegun as she lay in the sun, whining to her softly and touching her soft coat with his muzzle, but for a long time she paid little attention to him. At last she followed him. All that day they wandered and rested together. Once more the night came.

It was without moon or stars. Gray masses of clouds swept slowly down out of the north and east, and in the tree-tops there was scarcely a whisper of

wind
as night
gathered
in. The
snow began to
fall at dusk,
thickly, without a
breath of sound.

It was not cold,

but it was still—so still that Baree and Maheegun traveled only a few yards at a time, and then stopped to listen. In this way all the night-prowlers of the forest were traveling, if they were moving at all. It was the first of the Big Snow.

To the flesh-eating wild things of the forests, clawed and winged, the Big Snow was the beginning of the winter carnival of slaughter and feasting, of wild adventure in the long nights, of merciless warfare on the frozen trails. The days of breeding, of motherhood—the peace of spring and summer—were over; out of the sky came the wakening of the Northland, the call of all flesh-eating creatures to the long hunt, and in the first thrill of it living things were moving but little this night, and then watchfully and with suspicion. Youth made it all new to Baree and Maheegun; their blood ran swiftly; their feet fell softly; their ears were attuned to catch the slightest sounds.

In this first of the Big Snow they felt the exciting pulse of a new life. It lured them on. It invited them to adventure into the white mystery of the silent storm; and inspired by that restlessness of youth and its desires, they went on.

The snow grew deeper under their feet. In the open spaces they waded through it to their knees, and it continued to fall in a vast white cloud that descended steadily out of the sky. It was near midnight when it stopped.

Continued on page 589 of this issue.

"Well," drawled a voice, "I'm still here."
It was Peggy. Isn't it funny how these girls shoot up? Last time I'd seen her she'd been just a step removed from the cradle, and here she was, a full-grown young lady!



The Happiest Medium Possible

By Royal Brown
ILLUSTRATED BY R. F. JAMES

NOW, get this straight—nerve alone never made a big-league star, but it has put the final touches on a few I could name. For instance: Last year when I went South for spring training, Mary stayed on the ranch with the kiddies. I had an idea I'd seen my last season in fast company, and I'd made up my mind that there would be no dallying with the minors. If Hoyt, the new owner, asked for waivers, I intended to take the first train back home and devote my declining years to growing wheat. Instead, Hoyt made me manager.

Within forty-eight hours I began to

wish Mary was with me; I needed somebody to tell my troubles to. I didn't say so in as many words, but Mary got the idea just the same. Anyhow, one morning a polished ebony bell-hop handed me a telegram:

Starting South. Peggy with me. Arrive Sunday afternoon.

Peggy is my wife's youngest sister. I recalled her as a kid with her hair in curls three times as long as Mary Pickford's and twice as yellow. My wife always spoke of her as "a dear, funny child." So when I went to make arrangements with the clerk for an extra room

and found that the historic pile they call a hotel was full, I didn't get excited.

"We'll take the little girl in our room, then," I said. "Put in a cot and a screen."

I only hoped she wouldn't wake up in the morning and disturb us with her childish prattle.

Sunday afternoon I was at the station at three o'clock, although the train wasn't due until three-thirty, and I suspected it would be late. At four the engine sneezed in, with a final *cacheu* that sounded as if it felt it had done its duty and was about to die. Well it had—done its duty, I mean. For there was Mary, rosy and smiling. I gave her a twenty-one-gun welcome, and then I squeezed her hand while we both talked at once, like a couple of kids.

"Well," drawled a voice at my elbow, "*I'm* still here."

It was Peggy. Isn't it funny how these girls shoot up? Last time I'd seen her she'd been just a step removed from the cradle, and here she was, a full-grown young lady who looked as if she had stepped out of a moving picture! I don't need a second glance to put her in Class AA as far as looks go. She has one of those perfect skins and piles of wavy yellow hair. And eyes! Big and blue as horseshoe violets, they are.

Even the fact that her nose is a bit tip-tilted and her upper lip is short helps out on the general effect. There's a word that just describes her. *P* stands for *piquant*—also for *Peggy*.

"Isn't it perfectly spiffy?" she said, thrusting out a slim white hand.

"What?" I asked.

"Your being manager."

"I haven't decided yet," I replied.

"I should just adore it!" she exclaimed.

AT the hotel I started for the desk and caught the room-clerk looking at Peggy with a silly smile on his face. Not until then did I remember about the cot and screen for Peggy. I knew I'd have to change the layout, even if it meant forcing the clerk to give up his own bed and sleep with the cook, a gentleman of high color. I got him off to one side and he listened to me, his

eyes still on Peggy, and that silly grin still on his face.

"A commercial gentleman from the No'th left this morning," he said finally. "I reckon your wife's sister could have his room."

Mary turned Peggy over to a bell-hop, and we went to our room. The first thing she saw was the screen, of course.

"It was for Peggy," I confessed.

She laughed out loud. "Silly!" she said. And then: "Peggy has changed a lot, hasn't she?"

I agreed to that. "But she's still the funniest thing," Mary added. "She's so intense, always being just thrilled over something!"

That brought the conversation to a question I wanted to ask—which was as to how Peggy happened to be along. Mary comes from a family with connections and money and that sort of thing. Her folks, by which I mean her mother and another sister, raised hob when she married me. You would have thought she'd eloped with the butler.

"Peggy was sent out to the ranch because she wanted to go into the movies," Mary explained. "Mother thought a change of scenery might work a change of heart."

"Did it?" I asked.

Mary smiled. "It seemed to," she said. "That's the reason I brought her with me. If I had remembered Peggy was so impressionable, I'd have warned Mother about our ranch superintendent."

"Didn't it occur to you that you might ship her to a safer place?" I asked. "We've got the usual number of rookies, and I'll have to admit that there are some good-looking lads among them. There's Bretton Woods, for instance—"

"I can keep an eye on her," said Mary, confident as Ty Cobb facing a rookie pitcher. Then she gave me a hug. "Anyway, marrying a ball-player isn't the worst fate that could befall Peggy!"

There was no answer to that but one. But when the dinner-bell rang, and Mary began readjusting her hairpins, I felt it my duty to add: "As far as Bretton Woods is concerned, he'll never make a ball-player—at least not with this club."

But Mary, who had moved across the room to the mirror and finished arranging her hair, wasn't even interested enough to ask why.

At dinner we sat at a table by ourselves. Peggy let those violet eyes of hers rove about, appraising the various males present until—you've guessed it!

"Isn't he *adorable*!" she whispered to Mary. Then she turned to me and asked: "Who is the man at the third table—the one with the wavy dark hair?"

"Bretton Woods," I told her.

"Is he one of the stars?" she asked, ready to be thrilled.

"He's just a cub."

PEGGY wasn't to be disillusioned, however. She continued to look at Woods as unabashed as if he were some

zoo exhibit, until he caught her eyes on him and turned red and tried to bury his face in his soup.

"He looks like a Flagg drawing. He's simply stunning," breathed Peggy.

"He plays ball like a vaudeville sketch," I amended. "And he gets his feet all tangled up, and he either hits the ground in front of first plate or throws the ball into the grandstand. He isn't stunning—he's just stunned by the discovery he's playing in fast company."

That was a fact. I'd have been pleased as a ten-year-old boy with a big-league ball if this chap Woods had played half as good as he looked, and I don't mean his dark hair or his straight nose or nice gray eyes, either. I'm talking about his figure from the neck down.

with special emphasis on his legs.

Show me a chap with lean, speedy flanks and legs, and I'll look as pleased as a baldheaded spectator in the front row of a show for tired business men.

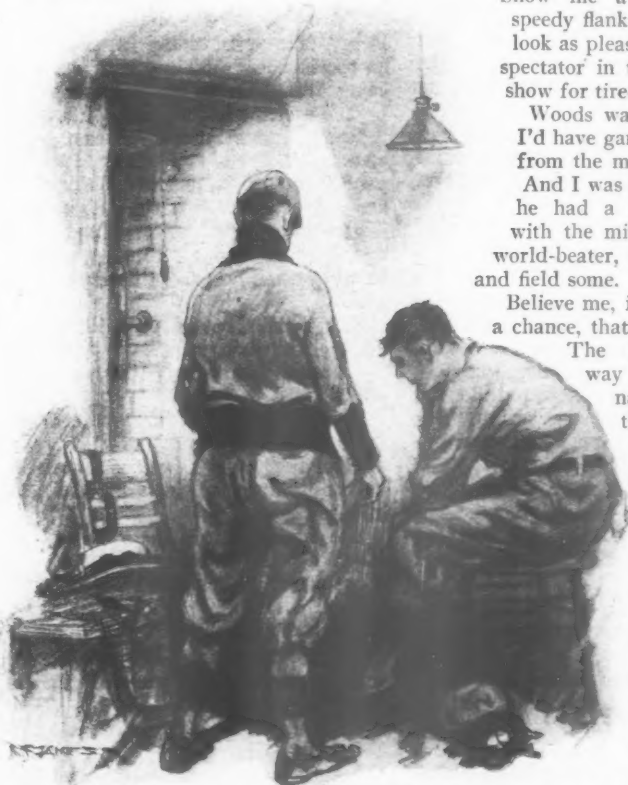
Woods was the type I liked.

I'd have gambled he had speed from the moment he reported.

And I was right. What's more, he had a pretty fair record with the minors. He wasn't a world-beater, but he could hit and field some.

Believe me, if a rookie ever had a chance, that rookie was Woods.

The Bridal Bells—the way the Club got the name is a story I'm tired of telling—was being touted as a pennant-bet and a possible world's title-holder. The baseball writers were talking about our infield—the fastest in the league, they called it. If anybody else had been manager, I'd have laughed at that. Neither McShane at second nor Smith at the far corner could cover



I hated to do it, but I braced him after the game. "Jack," I said, "have you eight weeks hard baseball in you?"

ground in the old way. As for Brophy at short—well, I had hoped and prayed and looked for a speedy youngster who could take Brophy's place and do a little more than his share of the work. And all that my looking and praying and hoping had brought me was this Woods.

There are certain players who look good when they're in the minors, but who can never deliver when they get a chance in the big league. Some people call it stage-fright, and others refer to it as a yellow streak. Take your choice; all I knew was that Bretton Woods had it.

One thing about him which didn't interest me particularly, but which I couldn't help noticing, was that he was the shyest man who ever stood on long, lean legs. He blushed like a girl when spoken to. If he wasn't on the field, exhibiting himself at his worst, he was off mooning by himself. When I saw him bolt from the dining-room, before the meal was half finished, I smiled. Peggy had stampeded him.

"You've lost him now," I said to her. "You won't get within speaking distance of him unless you creep up behind him with a lasso."

LATER that evening I decided she must have had the lasso. Mary and I wandered out onto the piazza in search of a quiet spot. The first thing we heard, mingling with the other voices of the night, was Peggy's eager young tones.

"I can swim all right and do the Australian splash," she was saying. "But *good night!* I can't get up the nerve to dive."

The night was as dark as the place under the bureau where your collar-button rolls to. I couldn't see who was with her, but I heard somebody stutter: "Is—is th—that s-so?"

"Last summer up at the Thousand Islands," continued Peggy, "a dory cruiser came up the river with a tiny dinghy trailing on behind. The name of the cruiser dory was *Hunky Dory*, and on the little dinghy bow was painted *Me Too.*"

Peggy laughed as she finished—what those magazine chaps call a delicious laugh. And Bretton Woods gurgled like

a man going down for the third time. I began to wonder if Peggy had tied him to his chair with that lasso she must have caught him with.

Mary and I tiptoed to the other end of the piazza, and I lighted a cigar. "She's only a child," said Mary, apropos of nothing.

"And so unconventional!" I added.

Peggy appeared in time to say good night. The next morning she came to the breakfast table in a short skirt, heelless shoes and one of those glorified silk sweaters—rose-colored, it was. She gave Woods a quick nod, smiled at us and prepared to massacre a grapefruit as preliminary to an exhibition of a healthy young appetite in action.

Woods gobbled down his eggs and toast and fled from the dining-room, his face as red as his uniform stockings.

"He's awfully shy," announced Peggy, frank-eyed as my boy Bob when he comes home with his hair wet after being forbidden to go swimming.

"It's a virtue in the young, I'm told."

Peggy turned those innocent violet eyes toward me. "I think it's just sweet," she agreed amiably. She pushed her grapefruit to one side, dipped her fingers into the finger-bowl and wiped them on her napkin. "I'm going to go to every game he plays this season," she added.

"Then you'll have to stay down South during the hot months," I replied, "—because it's down here that he'll play."

"Won't he be on your team?" she asked, surprised.

"Not if Brophy has to be wheeled to his position in an invalid's chair," I told her.

She leaned toward me. "Do tell me about it," she begged. "I know a lot about baseball—really!"

I'VE had frilly-looking young persons tell me that before, and so I prepared for the worst. But when I finished, Peggy just pursed her lips.

"It must be he lacks self-confidence," she said finally.

"Marvelous!" I cried. "You've hit it the very first time."

"There was a girl on the basketball

team at school—the one I managed, you know—who was just like that,” she added. “Her name was Evelyn and—”

“If she was anything like this Bretton Woods, say no more,” I cut in.

“But—” began Peggy persuasively.

“If you have a patent remedy, try it on Woods,” I said. “Go as far as you like, but spare me the details.”

“I will,” she said with a flashing smile.

After breakfast she disappeared. “I’ll bet she’s gone to find Bretton Woods and tell him all he needs is self-confidence,” I said to Mary with a grin. “And I’ll bet he plays worse than ever.”

He did. At lunch, however, Peggy arrived at the table all serene.

“Isn’t that big pitcher—Jones, I think his name is—a perfect scream!” she said. I knew she was referring to Jonesy’s winding-up motion, which always strikes the uninitiated eye as unnecessary and absurd.

“He wasn’t half as funny as some things I saw on the field to-day,” I shot back.

If she got it, she never batted an eyelash. But I guess it registered, for a minute later she turned to me and said: “Larry, I’d just love to bet you he’ll be a great player some day.”

“He is now,” I said. “Jonesy is one of the few cogs in this great machine that isn’t the worse for wear.”

“You know whom I mean,” she replied.

“All right,” I agreed. “We’ll call it a necktie—plain black, if you please—against five pounds of the best ice-cream drops you can find.”

“Done,” she announced, and gave me a hand on it.

Bretton Woods lasted five days longer. He played his position with a little more snap, and he no longer jumped a foot when somebody spoke to him. But Brophy was still far and away my best bet. So one night the press reports that the baseball writers telegraphed North had one pregnant sentence in them: “The rooky Bretton Woods beat it to the tall timbers to-day.”

Peggy saw him off, returning as unperturbed as ever.

“Wait until you get North before

you pick out that black necktie,” I said. “All they sell down here are those black shoe-string bows that Southern Congressmen wear—when they’re at home.”

“I said *some* day,” she objected. “I didn’t expect to change a man in a week.”

“Didn’t you?” I asked—think of an eighteen-year-old girl who isn’t convinced that she can change a man in seven days! “Take your time,” I added. “But remember thirty is a ripe old age for a ball-player.”

PEGGY smiled and gave the waiter

her order as if that were the only thing in the world that mattered just then. But Mary told me a different story that night. Peggy, she said, was simply determined to make Woods a success. Before Mary finished, I came to the conclusion that she’s as bad as the next woman when there’s romance in the air.

“He comes from a splendid family,” she said.

“I get you—old white house with colonial columns and tumble-down slaves’ quarters and all that sort of thing.”

“How did you know?” she demanded.

I smiled as I drew off my shoe. “I heard Peggy say he was a Southerner, and I guessed the rest of it. His family lost their fortune during the War and are now running a Marathon with the wolf, aren’t they?”

Mary admitted it. “I never knew it to fail,” I said, taking off my other shoe. “It’s too bad we can’t combine ‘The Social Register’ and ‘Spalding’s Guide’ so as to give Woods a chance.”

Mary snapped an elastic on the end of her braid. “It is too bad,” she retorted. “There is something tragic about Bretton Woods. His father is a misanthrope who kept Bretton at home all the years he should have been mixing with other boys his age. He just killed whatever spirit Bretton was born with.”

“It must have been a massacre,” I commented. “I never saw a man with less.”

“Bretton went to college,” continued Mary, “and just wandered from classroom to classroom without speaking to a soul. That gave his father, who had

been one of the most popular men in college in his day, a new gibe to throw at Bretton. But he overreached himself. He said things even Bretton wouldn't stand. And Bretton went out the door."

"So Bretton did show some spirit once?"

Mary nodded. "Peggy thinks that if he only will get some self-confidence, he'll surely make good. After he left his father's house, he went to work in one of the big mills as an office clerk. He played his first game of ball only a year ago, because somebody was needed to round out a nine."

"Same old story, I suppose," I said, trying to smother a yawn. "Natural ball-player, and after that the minors."

"Yes," admitted Mary, in a tone that meant she was more interested in her thoughts than what I was saying. "Peggy says his father has absolutely cast him off now. The crib he slept in as a baby was cut up for kindling the day his father heard he was playing professional baseball."

"It's too bad," I cut in. "Aren't you going to put out that light pretty soon?"

The next morning we started barnstorming our way north. Peggy said good-by to us at the first stop, and with her gone there was nothing to prevent me from forgetting Bretton Woods and his troubles. I had some of my own, and they were breeding like guinea pigs. The coming of the last of July, with us in second place, only a game and a half be-

hind the leaders, gave me fresh worries. According to the boys in the press box, McShane, Brophy and Smith were going better than ever. But every time anything

went in their direction I traded a black hair for a gray one. I had a hunch that the strain of the race we were running would tell on McShane first. I'd have given an eyetooth for a promising young second baseman. I was so busy watching McShane that I almost forgot about Brophy.

ONE afternoon, though, while we were playing the Leopards on our home grounds, a ball went past Brophy. I watched him the rest of the game. It was pitiful to see the way he'd try to summon all the old-time speed. He was pushing himself to the limit every time a chance offered. At that he was only a tenth of a second behind what he had been — but a tenth of a second had let one ball go by.

I hated to do it, but I braced him after the game. "Jack," I said, "have you eight weeks hard baseball in you?"



What did she do but demand that I let Woods sit in the grandstand with her up to the seventh inning, when she'd send him down to cover himself with dirt and glory! I knew she wanted to give him one last dose of the *Be yourself* hop, and so I answered eye.

He met my eyes squarely. "On the level, Larry, I don't think so."

Game was his middle name. Most players will holler if you as much as hint there'll come a day when they'll not be able to play their position with the same snap. No one was better pleased than myself when the news came the other day that Jack Brophy had fallen into one of the big berths in the Eastern League.

To return to my story: I took my problem to Mary. She knows almost as much about baseball as I do and a whole lot more about other things which a superficial observer might think had nothing to do with the game but which have, believe me.

Mary eyed me thoughtfully. "How about Bretton Woods?" she said.

It took me a minute to place who she meant. "Good night!" I said then. "He's playing better ball than ever," she protested.

"Let him," I answered. "We're in for a fighting finish, and I want a fighter." Then a thought struck me. "How do you happen to know all about him?"

Mary colored a little. "Peggy writes me occasionally," she confessed.

"I come to you for help, and you try to hoist him on me," I said reproachfully. "Do you think that's square?"

"What are you going to do?" she flashed back.

"I don't know. There isn't a club in the league would sell me anybody worth buying at this stage of the game except the tail-enders, and they haven't got anything I want, anyway."

"The minors?"

"A wild gamble."

Mary looked me in the eye. "Larry," she said, "Bretton Woods is your one best bet."

I started to holler afresh, but she drowned me out. Peggy, she said, had been working over Woods ever since spring. She'd been sending him a regular correspondence course in self-confidence. Believe it or not, she'd been reading books upon the subject, and once a week she'd send him a nice, chatty account of her doings, through which she'd sprinkle such things as "*Master Yourself!*" "*Master Your SUBCONSCIOUS*

THOUGHTS," putting the words in big letters now and then, the way Brisbane does in his editorials.

In short, she had laid herself out to make him *know* he was holding a royal straight-flush without having the nerve to play it. To which she subscribed herself, in each and every letter, as believing all she said and confident he would not disappoint her. And wasn't it nice that his batting average was getting fatter all the time! And believe her, it wouldn't be long before he had another chance in the big league. And then he **SIMPLY MUST MAKE GOOD** for her sake, as ever, Peggy.

It was some program. I'd never suspected Peggy would have stuck to it. I'd forgotten that if there was a perfectly good, custom-finished man in the foreground, the average woman would walk by him and pick out some impossible male hovering about the background who needed somebody to lick him into shape. Which is what women are made for, I guess—bless 'em.

NEVERTHELESS, I wasn't convinced. I've filled many a rooky full of advice and self-confidence before sending him to the mound, and then seen him blow the minute he got there. I told Mary so, but she refused to listen to me. She said Woods was exactly the kind of sensitive, high-strung critter that this correspondence course would turn the trick for, and that if I couldn't see that, it was because I didn't know human nature as well as she did—which I didn't and don't.

You know where I got off. Bretton Woods came. He gripped me by the hand without blushing. What's more, he looked me in the eye like one of those automobile salesmen who have taken special courses in the psychology of sales, and who are holding fast to the thought: "I am the master of this man's mind. If I *will* that he buy a five-thousand-dollar car, he *must* buy it." You know the kind—you almost have to lift them one to bring them back to earth so that you can tell them that while their conscious mind has been aviating, yours has been volplaning, and that, having got your feet on the ground,

you've balanced accounts and decided to buy a flivver, after all.

Love had found a way, as the best-sellers say. That night when Peggy appeared on the scene, tanned and rosy and radiant, I could smell the orange blossoms. Let Bretton make a triple play and slam out a home run with the bases full, and they'd live happily forever after. Isn't that the way you'd have doped it? I guess we're in the same class when it comes to feminine psychology.

I hadn't the nerve to bench Brophy and slip Woods into the line-up cold. So I arranged a little drama for the next afternoon. Brophy was to act as if he'd pulled a ligament in his arm in our half of the eighth. That would give me an opportunity to put Woods in and make it look as if I had to.

Peggy insisted upon knowing my plans. And what did she do but demand that I let Woods sit in the grandstand with her up to the seventh inning, when she'd send him down to put on his nice, clean suit to sally forth to cover himself with dirt and glory! I knew she wanted to give him one last dose of the *Be yourself* hop, and so I answered aye.

Everything went as planned. Woods came onto the bench, a bit pale under his tan. As he sat there, he reminded me of the man Mary tells of—the chap who says: "*I must be calm, I will be calm, I am calm—my God, how calm I am!*" When Brophy went through with his part and I sent Woods in to take his place, I noticed he walked as stiff-legged as a mechanical toy, but when the man at the bat sent a stinger toward short, the ball went to first prettily for a third out.

Woods was the second man up in our half of the inning. I ordered a bunt, and he filled the bill. And that completed the only two chances he got to figure in the box score. But I was satisfied. I told the boys in the press-box that Brophy was out of the game for a few days and that Woods was elected.

McShane and Smith, knowing that Brophy was still on deck and believing we had a ace in the hole, gave Woods gilt-edged support from the start, instead of worrying about the change and

letting the whole line of secondary defense go to pieces. And before long Woods was returning the favor. Those legs of his were delivering the goods, and his wonderful ground-covering ability caused the boys in the press box to herald him as a find. They even said he was better than Brophy at his best.

That was all that was needed to finish off that *I will* course. Woods began to hit the ball better than he had in the minors, even. Success went to his head like champagne to a teetotaler's. A child let out of school was like an old star headed for the bush compared to him.

NOW, don't get me wrong. I don't mean he was just plain swell-headed. He was simply overjoyed at discovering he wasn't a deuce, after all, and he wanted to slap on the back every man he met, and wink at every pretty girl. Talk about animal spirits—he had a menagerie full of them. The boys hazed him a bit, especially Anderson, who would rather play a practical joke on a newcomer than peg the pill to second in time to cut off a man stealing a base. But Woods always came back strong.

Anderson sprung all the old stuff like collect telegrams and express packages. Woods bit just once, and Anderson saw that he'd have to think up something good if it was to get across. So he laid off for a while and thought hard.

Then one night Anderson got a letter in female handwriting asking him if he would please call at the address given. The name that was signed to it didn't mean anything to Anderson, but he had a hunch that it was from a swell-looker he'd seen in the grandstand. Anderson had no more reason than most males for thinking she would write him, but that was enough—she'd looked in his direction once or twice when he was chasing a foul, and he figured she'd be happy to meet him.

The house at the address given was a swell one, and Anderson started up the front steps with his chest out. A big colored woman opened the door.

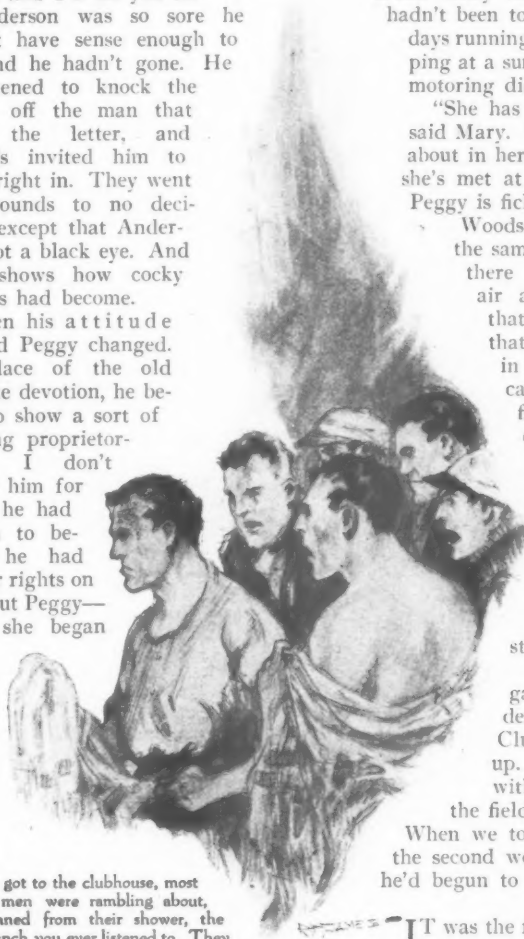
"Is Miss Twindie in?" he asked.

"Yes'm—that's me," said the colored

lady. "Go roun' to the back doah, and I'll let you in."

Anderson was so sore he didn't have sense enough to pretend he hadn't gone. He threatened to knock the block off the man that sent the letter, and Woods invited him to start right in. They went ten rounds to no decision, except that Anderson got a black eye. And that shows how cocky Woods had become.

Even his attitude toward Peggy changed. In place of the old doglike devotion, he began to show a sort of adoring proprietorship. I don't blame him for that; he had reason to believe he had waiver rights on her. But Peggy—well, she began



When I got to the clubhouse, most of the men were rambling about, pink-skinned from their shower, the sorest bunch you ever listened to. They were handing it to Woods raw, not directly but by comments tossed back and forth among themselves. But Woods, still in his uniform, didn't seem even to hear them.

to study him, her violet eyes thoughtful, as if she wasn't so satisfied with her handiwork, after all. The rifts within the lute, however, didn't affect his playing. Inside of two weeks Woods was a fixture at shortstop, and Peggy had received her five-pound box of candy.

When I sent it, I remembered what she had said about coming to see Woods

play every day that season, and so I asked Mary how it happened Peggy hadn't been to the ball-park for four days running, although she was stopping at a summer resort within easy motoring distance.

"She has lost interest, I think," said Mary. "At least, all she speaks about in her letters is a young man she's met at Magnolia. I'm afraid Peggy is fickle."

Woods must have arrived at the same conclusion. I noticed there was a devil-may-care air about him. I decided that he'd made up his mind that there were as good fish in the sea as ever had been caught. Anyway, he flirted outrageously with every woman that came his way. Once, though, when McShane started to kid him about the girl at the news-stand at the hotel, he told him to mind his own business. Only he said it somewhat stronger than that.

After that, McShane gave him the cold shoulder, and the rest of the Club began to pass him up. On the field he played with a cold fury, and off the field he herded by himself.

When we took to the road during the second week in August, I guess he'd begun to feel lonesome.

IT was the first of September when we returned home. Mary had intended to leave me in Chicago and continue west, but at the last minute I couldn't let her go. Things were breaking too hard and fast. On the morning of our first game with the Goliaths on the home grounds, she was sitting beside me in the hotel lobby, reading the advertisements in the morning paper with customary care. After she finished with them, she cast a casual glance over the unimportant news of the day, such as the changes in the battle-lines in Europe and the danger of a railroad strike.

All of a sudden she sat up straight. "How ridiculous!" she said, handing me the paper.

The article she pointed out began "Rumor hath it" and then set forth in detail a lot of gossip about Peggy and this young chap Mary had been telling me about—the one who was summering at Magnolia and devoting himself to Peggy. He was the son of a New York banker, and rumor had doped it that he and Peggy were headed for the altar.

"Isn't it absurd?" demanded Mary when I finished.

"Why?" I asked. "The young man seems to have all the desirable qualities."

"But Peggy is such a child!" she explained—at which I strangled a smile, which Mary wouldn't have noticed, anyway, because the bell-hop came to tell her she was wanted on the telephone.

Five minutes later Mary returned to say that Peggy was in town for a little shopping, and that Peggy said she'd seen the report in the papers and that there wasn't any truth in it and that she'd take lunch with us and perhaps go to the game.

Mary gave me all that in a single earful, and then went up to our room. While I waited for her to come back, Bretton Woods appeared and, crossing the lobby, sat in the chair I'd just vacated and picked up the morning paper. The first thing his eye lighted on was the story about Peggy. And it was the last. He threw down the paper and galloped out the door like a thoroughbred entering the stretch.

I knew how he felt. He'd looked all the other fish in the sea over and decided that the one he'd lost was the only one he cared anything about, after all.

Peggy lunched with us, giving Dame Rumor something more to talk about by bringing the young man in question with her. He answered to the name of Saunders, and he proved to be a perfectly good, custom-finished male who joked with her and us about that newspaper story. After lunch we all went to the ball-park, where Mary, Peggy and the young man sat in my box—where Bretton Woods couldn't help seeing them the minute he came on the field.

Until we took our positions he sat

on the bench with his eyes straight in front of him. The way he played after the game started had my hair on end. He seemed to think he had a roving commission, and he grabbed grounders that belonged to Smithy and flies that belonged to Hall, the left-fielder. In eight innings he made a dozen stops I would have sworn couldn't be made by a shortstop, and every one of them was followed by a perfect peg to first.

At the bat he got a double the first time up and a triple the second. I knew all this activity was connected with Peggy's appearance in the box with that young man rumor had handed her. Woods was showing her how much *he* cared.

IN the first half of the ninth, with the Goliaths at the bat, a man on first and third and two out, Slater, their catcher, lifted a weak fly. Everybody could see that it was a cinch for Woods. The fielders started in, and the fans began to hike for the exits, for the score was one to nothing in our favor.

Woods dropped the ball. It went through his hands—it was *too* easy. For a moment everybody stood stock-still. Then both runners got into motion.

Even then if Woods had picked up the ball and pegged it home, he could have cut off the man racing for the plate. But he simply stood there in a trance. Before he came to, the man on first had reached third. Then McShane grabbed the ball and pegged it in to the plate. And Anderson muffed it. I couldn't blame him; I'd have probably done the same thing myself.

Woods' error, followed by his bone, had cost us what looked like a sure-thing game. To appreciate the full enormity of his offense, all I need say is that when we started the game we were in first place for the first time that season. That night we were in third place.

When I got to the clubhouse, most of the men were wandering about, pink-skinned from their shower, the sorest bunch you ever listened to. They handed it to Woods raw, not directly but by comments tossed back and forth among themselves. But Woods, still in his uniform, didn't seem even to hear them.

I was sore myself. But as I looked at him I realized that all we could say to him wasn't half so bad as what he was saying to himself. He'd lost the game and perhaps the pennant by pulling the worst bone of the season in the presence of the girl he loved—to say nothing of eighteen thousand rabid fans. So I caught McShane's eyes and shook my head, and after that there was a lull in the rough stuff.

When the rest of them had gotten into their street-clothes, I went over and put my hand on Woods' shoulder. "Buck up," I said. "We all pull bones once in a while."

He looked up at me as if he'd never seen me before. Then he laughed in a way that was as pitiful as a sob. "Not a bone like that," said he. "You'd better ship me to the minors."

"Nonsense," I said. "You'll be back there to-morrow, playing better ball than ever."

He shook his head. "Never again! I'm through. The only reason I ever got away with the job was because I'd been puffed up full of conceit like a bag full of wind. Now the bag's pricked."

"That's yellow-dog talk."

"That's what I am—a yellow dog."

What's the use of blackguarding a man that agrees with the worst thing you can say to him? I changed my tactics once more. "Get into your clothes and come along and talk it over with my wife."

"I never want to speak to a woman again," he bellowed. "They're all —" And then he realized what he was saying and apologized. "I don't mean that, but — well, I simply can't explain. I just don't care if I never play another game."

I SUPPOSE I should have delivered a broadside. But I tried to remember he was feeling as bad as a human being can feel. So I just told him to get into his street-togs, intending to steer him up against Mary anyway.

In five minutes he was dressed. As we passed up through the runway, his face was set as grim as though he were going to his electrocution. The stands

were emptied, of course—all except a single figure which I recognized. She saw us—or rather she saw Bretton, and she went to him like a mother-bird to its young.

"Bretton!" she said. And then as his face began to work, she put her arms on his shoulders. "My poor, dear boy!"

I sneaked away and left them there in each other's arms. Peggy showed up at the hotel at eight o'clock and wept on Mary's shoulder. That was in our room. She told me that Bretton was downstairs in the lobby waiting to see me.

"I'm going to be roasted in the papers to-morrow as I deserve. Chief," said he, "and I don't suppose I'll ever live that bone down, but to-morrow I'm going back there and deliver."

The rest of the story you can write yourself, including the reconciliation of Bretton and his old man, who got the surprise of his life when he discovered his son was about to marry into a family with references in both "The Social Register" and "Bradstreet's." That is, you can write it unless, like me, you can't make out why it was Peggy turned Bretton down when she'd pushed him up to the top of the ladder, and then turned around to give him a hand when he'd fallen to the bottom again.

Mary tried to explain it to me. At first, she said, Bretton had been so sweet and modest and unassuming and sort of apologetic for living, that Peggy simply couldn't help liking him. Then after she had spent all that effort on him, he'd become insufferably cocksure and overbearing, and she simply wouldn't tolerate it. But when he dropped that fly and everybody hooted and yelled "Bone-head," she discovered she couldn't live without him.

All of which was as clear to me as the home grounds after a three-day rain.

"Why didn't she leave him alone in the first place?" I asked. "That's the way she liked him, wasn't it?"

"There's a happy medium, isn't there?" demanded Mary.

Perhaps there is. Peggy and Bretton Woods seem to have discovered it, and offhand I should call it the very happiest medium possible.

Another story by Royal Brown in an early issue.

Shoestring Charlie looked up. "Who's dead besides the ostrich?" he asked.



Blue Monday

A story of
Shoestring Charlie

By Courtney
Ryley Cooper

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. M. BRINKERHOFF

BY all the laws of circusdom it should have been a quiet, peaceful, good-for-the-heart day. Sunday always is—in the circus. Then there is nothing to do, after the long trains have been unloaded, the menagerie up and the "big top" half raised from the ground, except to wander about town or go to the park or sit in the shadow of the marquee where the treasury-wagon has been pulled in out of the sun, and watch the paying-off of the razorbacks, the canvas-men, the hostlers and the "punks." Away out in the woods, somewhere, with the boss property-man as master of ceremonies and the cookhouse chef presiding at the pots and pans, the performers are having a "Mulligan stew." Over by the stake-and chain-wagon, the bosses are telling stories of other days and borrowing money as they struggle for supremacy in the excitement of "seven-card peek." Down at the cars the loaders are storing up sleep against the time of night-and-day work, later in the week. The manager is in his office dozing over the

Sunday papers. A slothfulness is over everything. The circus is at rest and play, and the world is good—

Usually! But for once, Sunday in the owner's office of the World Famous bore a different aspect. At the little table sat two men, Harry McGinty, the "fixer," and Shoestring Charlie Grenolds. The hair of the little circus-owner was mussed. His face, still bearing the grit of a long ride in a day-coach, was unwashed. His hands were dirty. Before him, on the table, lay a scattering of tobacco, the windfalls of the rolling of many cigarettes.

McGinty, the fixer, was panting a bit. "I got here as soon as I found out you was in town," he began, but Shoestring cut in.

"Yeh—but that aint the point. What I want to know is what all this here row's about."

McGinty shifted in his chair.

"Maybe if Hudson'd been here, it wouldn't 've happened, because he wouldn't 've let this guy in the menagerie in the first place. But he'd gone out

Anita, the Leopard Queen, sniffled again. "Please, Mr. Shoestring," she began, "I want to get off to-morrow. I don't want to work. I—"



to the park an' left me actin' manager. Well, this Devine comes along, wearin' a big blazer in his shirt-front, an' wants to go in an' look around the menagerie. Knowin' that he was a pretty big guy in politics an' all that sort o' thing, I passes him on in. The next thing I know, I hear a yap from inside, an' Shorty Ennis comes tearin' out an' says that Bill Spivens, one o' the ostriches, has reached over when this here Devine aint lookin', an' nipped the diamond off his shirt-front an' swallowed it. I tear inside, an' Devine is squawkin' like a sucker. Then he begins gettin' sore an' says the show'll have to pay him three thousand beans for that diamond or he'll tie it up in a double knot."

"H'm!" Shoestring Charlie stared out the window and began rolling a new cigarette. McGinty went on with his recital:

"I tried to tell him it wasn't our fault, but it didn't go. He began turnin' loose a lot o' stuff about what he'd do to the show if he didn't get that there diamond back, an' I went up in the air an' lost

my head. Hudson was out where I couldn't talk to him, an' you wouldn't get in until late—an' it was up to me to go ahead an' do what I thought best. Shorty tips me off to kill the ostrich an' get the diamond an' then not give it back to this Devine until he'd paid for the ostrich. I tells Devine that we're goin' to kill Bill an' cut him open, an' he seems satisfied. Then we gets together an' puts poor ol' Bill out an' slices into him. There's the diamond, still in his neck. I cops it an' then tells this here Devine I want a hundred dollars for one perfectly good ostrich before I'll kick in with his blazer. An' then he turns loose the fireworks."

"Peeved, huh?" Shoestring Charlie leaned across the table.

McGinty grunted.

"Peeved? You'd of thought somebody'd cut his right leg off. He lets loose a line o' cuss-words that'd wreck a steamship, an' tears out o' the tent. Out under the marquee, he turns around an' tells me that either I'll give him that there diamond for nothin' or he'll make me so much trouble I'd be around wishin' money on him to get him to stop. Well, I'd gotten my head back then, a bit, an' I told him he'd have to see Hudson. Then off the lot he goes, an' I wraps up the blazer in a piece o' tissue-paper an' sticks it in my pocket. Y'see, I'm figurin' all the time that he'll get some sense in his head an' come back an' pay for that ostrich. But he don't come back. The next thing I know, I gets a tip from a front-office Dick that he's been down to the city hall an' dug up an old ordinance prohibitin' circus-parades an' went an' put it up to the chief o' police. He owns the chief. An'—"

"An' what?" Shoestring's cigarette was glowing. He ran a thin hand through his cinder-strewn hair.

"An'—that's about all," McGinty concluded somewhat mournfully. "I tears down to find Devine an' try to square with him, an' I can't locate him. I—"

"But you've still got that diamond?" Shoestring had turned, and his voice was snapping.

"Yes."

"Hand 'er over."

A BIT of lumpy tissue-paper passed between them. Shoestring Charlie Grenolds unrolled the paper and stared a moment at the glittering stone within. Then his head set quickly between his shoulders, and he spoke sharply:

"You're sure the chief'll follow out this Devine guy's orders?"

"Yes."

"And cut us out of a parade?"

"Yes sir—that is, unless I can find him to-night and give him his old diamond an' square him up. It's about all—"

"Listen, kid," Shoestring cut in quickly. "You aint goin' to find nobody that even looks like him. What you're goin' to do is to tear out somewhere an' get hold of a law-shark that'll make out an attachment the first thing in the morning against this guy for this here diamond, to pay for the trouble and expense o' ruinin' the life, love an' affection of one ostrich. Then you're goin' to burn up the streets, gettin' to the newspapers an' handin' 'em eight million passes to the show to-morrow so they wont say nothin' about this here Devine tryin' to cut out our parade. Do you follow me?"

"I'm ahead of you." McGinty reached for his hat, while Shoestring Charlie reached for the makin's of a new cigarette. A knock sounded at the door. McGinty turned, twisted the knob—then stood aside as a red-eyed woman passed him.

"Hello, Annie," he said. "Somebody stepped on your foot?"

The woman sniffled. McGinty went on. Shoestring Charlie Grenolds pulled another handful of cinders from his hair and looked up.

"Who's dead besides the ostrich?" he asked.

Anita, the Leopard Queen, sniffled again.

"Please, Mr. Shoestring," she began. "I want to get off to-morrow. I don't want to work. I—"

But Shoestring had cut in again.

"Listen, kid." One hand went appealingly to his forehead. "Tell it to Hudson. My head hurts. I got a lot o' things to think about. I got a blue Monday in front o' me. And anyway, I got to take a bath!"

He rose, and leaving the sniffling woman behind him, wandered up-town toward a hotel. An hour later, with the dirt and the grime of the day-coach gone, he strolled to the circus-lot, crossed before the half-unfurled banners of the kid-show, passed under the marquee into the menagerie-tent and stood looking for a long time at a lumpy canvas-covered thing which lay behind the ostrich enclosure. Long he stood there, while one cigarette after another found its way to his lips—but he said nothing. Shoestring Charlie was thinking—with a dead ostrich as his thesis.

Presently McGinty appeared. The fixer was perspiring, but there was a light of hope in his eyes.

"Got 'er framed," he announced. "Got the papers all shut up so they wont say nothin'. I guess the word'll go around the city hall, but it wont get much further. We'll have the crowd out, all right—if we can find any way to parade. I got hold of a lawyer, an' we'll get that attachment the first thing in the mornin'. Figured out any way to get around that ordinance?"

"Me?" Shoestring turned quickly. "Me? No. I've been tryin' to think of what to do with that there ostrich. We got to bury him somewhere. I'm goin' back to the car."

THE lights flashed out in Shoestring's stateroom about ten o'clock. But Shoestring Charlie did not sleep for a long, long time. When he awoke in the morning, it was with a headache, and the brown taste of cigarettes on his tongue—but no solution. Once out of the cook-house, he hurried to the city hall and looked at the ordinance. It was exceedingly plain—one of those unenforced things that lie upon the statute books of any city, awaiting the time for a disgruntled individual to dig it up and cause trouble. It was ironclad. Shoestring turned, and once more went toward the circus-lot.

"They's only one thing to do," he announced as he met McGinty in front of the marquee. "That's to fix up some guys with banners and send them down-town, announcin' the glad news that there aint goin' to be no grand, glitterin' "

and glorious pee-rade. Where's Hudson?"

"Sick, down at the cars—bilious."

"Oh, fine!" Shoestring reached quickly for his first aid, the cigarette-makin's. "Serve that attachment?"

"Yes, an' he howled like a stuck pig. Said he'd turn this show inside out."

"That'll do it good—dry it out, after some o' the wet weather we've been havin'. Suppose he's got eighteen million police framed around to stop a parade?"

"Worse'n that."

"Nice, fine blue Monday, aint it? Shorty Ennis fixed that there ostrich up?"

"Yes, but he don't know where to take him."

"Don't know—say, listen, kid: aint he got no brains? No wonder Shorty aint got no hair. There aint nothin' to tell it where to grow. Go in there an'—huh?"

He had turned at a question from the neighborhood of his hip, where the head of a freckled messenger-boy stared up at him. A letter was in the boy's hand. Shoestring squinted.

"Who'd you say?" he asked. "The manager? I'm about all there is o' him. That letter for me?" He rammed a hand under the flap of the envelope. He squinted hard at the writing—then suddenly whirled.

"Hey—kid!" The boy, ten feet away, turned. "Who'd this here spiel come from?"

"I dunno. A man give it to me on the street." Whistling, the boy was gone again. Shoestring waved the letter before him.

"Can you beat this here?" he asked quickly. "Here I gets a note from some guy that don't even sign his name, and he calls a messenger-boy to tell me that there aint no law against funerals. What do I care if they aint no law? What I'm worried about is the law against parades. And—g-o-o-d night!"

Suddenly a sinewy hand clamped itself about the arm of the staring McGinty. Shoestring was talking—and his words were sharp and quick.

"Beat it—you!" he ordered. "Find Shorty and tell him to hold that there

ostrich. Then get me Doc Hastings—run, dog on it! Somethin's poppin'. Hey, you," he shouted to a passing hostler as McGinty speeded away. "hitch up the gilly-wagon and beat it back here! I'm in a hurry!"

FIVE minutes of waiting, while Shoestring Charlie looked at his watch half a hundred times. It was ten o'clock. Downtown the crowds were beginning to gather. Downtown the curbs were beginning to fill, and the toy-balloon venders were shouting their wares. Downtown there were men and women and children, waiting for something that might not appear—while out at the entrance of the lot ten policemen had made their appearance—and Shoestring knew the reason.

Five minutes more. Then Shoestring veered at the appearance of the circus-fixer and the circus-physician. The rumbling sound of a wagon, and Shoestring ran forward, diving into a pocket as he went.

"Come on, you!" he shouted to McGinty and the doctor. "We've got a chance!"

A moment later a careening wagon containing three excited men rushed from the lot. Shoestring Charlie was driving—and giving directions at the same time.

"Get ten dollars' worth o' crape," he ordered as he handed a bill to McGinty, "—ten dollars' worth o' the crapiest crape in this here town,—and then you beat it to this here circus-lot and turn it over to the wardrobe-woman. And tell her if she—giddap, what's the matter with you?—and tell her if she aint got it ready and tied on everybody by the time I'm back, I'll throw a spasm. Hear me?"

"Yes sir!"

"And that aint all. Get hold o' a movin'-wagon somewhere and run it out to the lot. Tell Soapy Greenlee I want 'Funeral Car' painted all over it."

"But—"

"There aint no *but's* about it! Here's a dry-goods store. Now beat it."

The rocking, bumping wagon lost an occupant. Shoestring slammed the reins on the horse's back and went on. Now

and then he leaned toward the doctor, giving him instructions. Five minutes—ten, fifteen. They pulled up at the curbing of the city hall and leaped forth. A moment later, and Shoestring Charlie, his lungs puffing from the exertion, leaned across a desk in the health department.

"Listen, pal," he announced. "I'm Shoestring Charlie, of the World Famous Circus. I'm up against it awful. One o' my best friends in the world's just bumped off, and we've got to plant him. This here's the Doc. Slip us a burial-permit and a funeral-license, will you, old kid?"

BEHIND the desk the permit-clerk smiled a bit.

"Certainly. Age?"

"Mine?"

"No, the deceased."

"Oh—h'm! Twenty-eight. —wasn't he, Doc?"

"Somewhere around there!" The circus-physician sought for his gravest expression. The clerk was beginning the filling out of the necessary blanks.

"Name?"

"William Spivens."

"Color?"

"Black and white," replied Shoestring.

"Huh?"

"Black and white—circus exhibit."

"Oh!" The clerk smiled again. "Be pretty hard to say just what nationality he was, then?"

"Harder'n thunder," Shoestring answered as he again reached for his makin's. "Just leave it blank. Put in there where it says cause o' death—effects o' operation. Hey, Doc!" He turned. "Sign this here and le's go. We got a busy day!"

The physician signed. The permit-clerk reached for his stamp.

Then he leaned across the counter, close to the ear of Shoestring Charlie.

"We'll cut the affidavit," he whispered. Shoestring's eyes went wide.

"You're the guy that sent the note?"

"The same.

But I've got to keep mum. It'd mean my job. By the

way, if I were you, I'd read the section of the ordinance just following that about the parade. There's something there you might want to know."

Shoestring's small, sinewy hand went out again and gripped tight at that of the permit-clerk. Then with the permit folded in an inner pocket, he turned and hurried for the statutes, the physician behind him. Slowly he read for a moment. Then suddenly he straightened and whirled.

"Doc!" he ordered.

"Get out there to the circus-lot and get them guys ready. I'll come in a taxi. Make every guy in that parade put on a band o' crape. Tell the bands and the calliope-player to tear loose with a lot o' stuff that's weepy and blue. Let 'em be practicing up on



Shoestring Charlie leaned across the desk. "Listen, pal," he announced. "I'm up against it awful. One o' my best friends in the world's just bumped off, and we've got to plant him. This here's the Doc. Slip us a burial-permit and a funeral-license, will you, old kid?"

the lot before I get there. Hear me?"

The doctor had heard—and was half out the door. Once more Shoestring Charlie Grenolds of the World Famous squinted at the section of the hitherto disregarded circus-ordinance—then hurried from the building. Five minutes more, and he was pushing a wad of bills beneath the wicket of a bank-teller's cage.

"Thirty dollars' worth o' pennies," he ordered, "and railroad 'em!"

OUT of the bank came Shoestring, cramming pennies into his pockets as he went, and into a taxi. Ten minutes more, and he leaned forward in the taxicab as the rushing machine approached the circus-lot. There, in front of the menagerie-tent, the parade was forming. Crape was flying from the pennon-standards. At the head of it all a moving-van stood waiting, while busy men sloshed their paint-brushes here and there upon its sides. From the menagerie-tent a dozen workmen were lugging a great box—the last earthly remains of Bill Spivens, the ostrich. The band was in its place—and playing. Shoestring Charlie started at the realization that his shoulders were moving in unison with the music. He grunted; he fidgeted. Then, as the brakes of the machine creaked, he jerked open the door and leaped forth. His arms waved toward the band-leader, and he ran forward.

"Mike!" he shouted, "this aint no walkin'-the-dog contest. This here's a funeral. Where'd you get the idea to spiel that junk?"

"Junk?" The band-leader bent forward. "Doc brought us orders from you to play it. He said you wanted some blue music, and this here's the bluest we got. It's 'The Memphis Blues.'"

"Maybe it is, but I don't want no rag-time. I want some down-an'-out junk, like they play for funerals—that thing that goes *'lump-lump-de-lump-blaw-w-w-w-w-w-de-lumpty-lumpty-lump.'*"

The band-leader squinted.

"You wants 'Chopin's Funeral March.'" he announced. "But that aint no stuff for a circus-parade."

"Circus-parade, your hat! This aint

no circus-parade. This here's a funeral, and we're all mournin' our heads off. Now turn on the sorrow! Hey,"—he swerved as the band-leader turned to his men,—“where's Leopard Annie? I want her up here on this here hearse. Is she still tuned up—she was bawlin' her head off about somethin' yesterday."

Ten minutes later Leopard Annie, otherwise Anita the Leopard Queen, was protestingly dragged from a hiding-place in the dressing-tent. Shoestring watched her as she took her place on the funeral-wagon; then he hurried toward the calliope.

"Know anything dead?" he asked.

"Dead?"

"Yeh, anything weepy?"

"Sure. 'Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night?'"

"Good enough! Cut loose with it. A-l-l r-i-g-h-t!" He turned and waved his arms toward the equestrian director. "Le's go!"

SLOWLY, with the band struggling against the circus desire for syncopation as they played the funeral march, and with the calliope screeching forth the sad query of "The Wandering Boy," the mourning cortège of the dead Bill Spivens started forward—then stopped. Ten policemen were blocking the way. Shoestring ran forward.

"Leggo that horse's head!" he ordered of the foremost policeman. "Where do you get this here sacrilege thing!"

"We've got orders."

"Orders—for what?"

"To stop this circus-parade if it started, and arrest everybody in it."

"You arrest anybody here,"—Shoestring Charlie's voice was barking,—“and this here whole city'll be sued off the map. This aint no circus-parade—it's the funeral o' the Honorable Bill Spivens—an' here's the permit for the funeral an' burial. So leggo—"

"But—"

"Leggo—you hear me? Get out an injunction if you want to—but you aint goin' to stop this here funeral. Leggo—hear me!"

Again the band blared. Again the calliope screeched. Again the moving-van with its corpse of Bill Spivens and



"Wait a minute," cried Shoestring. "Before you do any pinchin', take a look at that sign on that there ticket-wagon. This here's a special bargain day, and there sint no ticket costin' more'n forty-nine cents. And there sint no bond necessary for that."

its red-eyed Leopard Annie moved forward, the varicolored tableau-wagons and their crape-bedecked occupants wobbling on behind. Within the lion-cage sat a mournful trainer, a band of crape about his hat. The circus patrol-wagon bore a weeping, sorrowful, painted clown. One by one came the elephants, a bow of crape on every tail. All was sorrow; all was melancholy—with the calliope screaming out the agony of "The Wandering Boy" at the end.

A consultation of the police. Again they looked at the permits. Again they stared at the nondescript funeral-procession as it wound its way off the lot. Then they shook their heads and moved away. Shoestring Charlie, his eyes twinkling, watched them.

"I've got 'em lashed to the mast," he murmured. "I—"

He suddenly realized that he was smiling, and immediately dispersed the expression for one of gloom. Then, with a handkerchief wiping his eyes now and then, he climbed on the back of a camel and went sagging and mourning forth with the procession.

Down the main street while the crowds gasped and gaped! Down through the business-district, while police interfered, argued and then fell to one side—struggling with the problem of when a funeral is not a funeral. Out into the residence-districts and far past the edge of town, where leaping workmen hurried forth on a vacant lot and dug the grave of Bill Spivens. Strangely enough, there wasn't any service. Also the mourning ceased for a bit; there wasn't anyone out there to watch.

AGAIN into town—and again excessive grief. Again gasps and wonderment. Again the circus-lot, while Shoestring Charlie grinned as he watched the performers throw away the crape which had adorned them and hurry to the cook-house. A sudden thought of appetite, and he started forward himself, only to stop at the touch of the still red-eyed Leopard Annie.

"Please, Mr. Shoestring, aint I done enough?" she asked. "Please, can't I stay out of the performances? I—"

"Aint you seen Hudson?" Shoestring

scratched his head. "Oh, that's right. He's sick. But listen, Annie, we can't spare nobody. It's—"

"But I can't work. Honest! It aint in me. I—"

"Why not?"

Anita the Leopard Queen stared distressfully into the distance.

"I—I don't want him to see me."

"Him?" Shoestring's eyes went wide. "Who's him?"

Leopard Annie hesitated.

"Oh—a fellow."

"Sure, he's a fellow. But what about him?"

There was a long moment of hesitation. Leopard Annie sniffled a bit; then the tears came again.

"His—his name's Wilson and—and he's in the city hall here. And—"

"Wilson—that there's the name that clerk signed on the burial-permit. What about him?"

"Oh—nothing—only him and I were engaged when he was over on the Wheeler and Junkin Shows, working the concessions, and—and I threw him over because I fell for a guy that was going to make me a motion-picture star. And—and he didn't do it, and I'm still just a leopard-trainer, and Wilson'll be out here,—I know that,—and I don't want him to see me. I had my face hid during parade, but I can't do that this afternoon, and—"

Shoestring Charlie took his cigarette from his lips long enough to whistle.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "That there explains a lot o' things. Now I know why he put me hep to that there stunt. You still love him?"

"Ye-yes."

"An' if he still was cuckoo about you, would you marry him?"

"Ye-yes."

"Then tear back into that dressin'-tent an' get on your ring-clothes. You're goin' to work this afternoon and night."

"But please, Mr. Shoestring—"

"And cut out the weeps. You're goin' to get somethin' you don't expect. But beat it—I'm busy!"

He rushed from the circus-lot and into a taxicab. Ten minutes more, and he was at the city hall, whispering to the young man behind the permit-desk. A

half-hour more, and he had returned to the circus-lot, to whisper in turn to the excited Leopard Annie. Then he strolled slowly to the cook-house and ordered a porterhouse steak.

In the midst of his meal came an interruption—an interruption in the form of the hurrying Mr. McGinty, who rushed forward, a worried expression on his features, his hands twitching a bit.

"It's all off," he announced as he came forward. "They've got something else up their sleeve."

"Who?"

"Devine. He's out there with the chief of police, waiting for the treasury-wagon to open. He says he'll pinch the joint the minute they sell a ticket."

"That so?" Shoestring Charlie stared at the ribbed top of the cook-house tent. "The ticket-wagon aint opened yet?"

"No."

"And it aint goin' to open up till I get out there and give the word. Soapy's paintin' a sign to go on it. Tear around an' hurry him up on it. But there aint no rush—I got a steak to eat before things start."

PEACEFULLY

and quietly Shoestring Charlie ate his large porterhouse steak, smothered in mushrooms. He dallied over his iced tea. Then slowly he wandered forth to the packed midway, where the first thousand persons of a "turn-away" audience clamored for their tickets. A man rushed toward him, showed the lettering of a sign and then hurried toward the ticket-wagon. Shoestring peered about him. Then he walked forward to where two men, one of whom wore the uniform of the chief of police, were standing in watchful waiting. Shoestring grinned.

"Where's this here Devine guy?" he asked. A tall, somewhat pompous person with a hole in his shirtfront where a diamond stud once

had centered, turned and stared. "I'm him." "Good!"

Shoestring stuck forth a hand. "I'm Shoestring Charlie, the guy that owns the trick. Understand you want to pinch somebody."

"Correct."

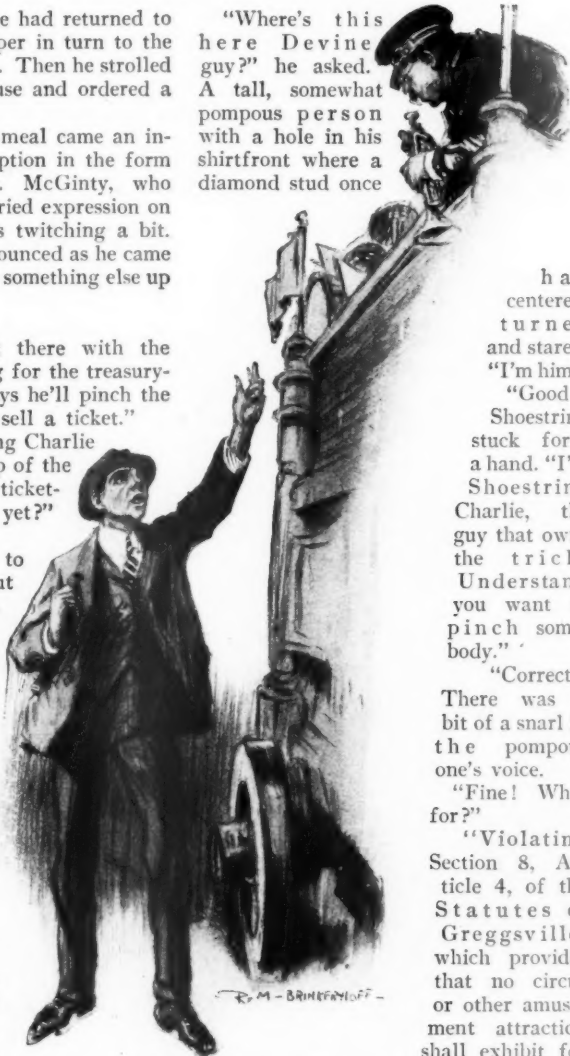
There was a bit of a snarl in the pompous one's voice.

"Fine! What for?"

"Violating Section 8, Article 4, of the Statutes of Greggsville, which provides that no circus or other amusement attraction shall exhibit for an admission-fee of fifty cents without first depositing a bond

of ten thousand dollars with the city clerk to cover— Hey, Chief!" the pompous one broke off to say, "There—they're selling tickets—get 'em!"

"Wait a minute," cried Shoestring. "Before you do any pinchin', take a look at that sign on that there ticket-wagon.



"Junk?" The band-leader bent forward. "Doc said you wanted some blue music, and this here's the bluest we got. It's 'The Memphis Blues.'"

This here's a special bargain day, and it says that there aint no ticket costin' more'n forty-nine cents. And there aint no bond necessary for that—and what's more, that there treasurer in there's got the pennies to make change with."

A gasp! A snort! A rushing form of blue that made investigations and then slowly returned. Shoestring Charlie reached for his pass-pad.

"And say, guys," he announced, "I want you two to come out to-night. They's goin' to be somethin' doin' that'll probably mean another turn-away. This here Wilson guy that's been workin' as

permit-clerk in the health department's goin' to marry Anita the Leopard Queen in a den o' trained but untamed animals, and it'll be worth lookin' at. 'By the way,"—and he turned sharply to Devine,—"I got a sparkler o' yours. It's kind o' yellow, but it aint a bad stone, at that. Do you want to fork over that hundred beans an' take it out o' hock?"

The pompous one reached grudgingly toward a pocket.

"You win," he growled.



"Please, Mr. Shoestring, aint I done enough?" she asked. "Please, can't I stay out of the performances? I—"

More or Less Atoms

A story of
Shagbark Jones

By Ellis
Parker Butler

ABOUT two weeks after the arrest of Ned Pangburn for the murder of Crill Taggus—and the arrest was about the middle of July—that remarkable old medicine faker and mystery man, Shagbark Jones, arrived at the levee at Hardentown, on the Mississippi; and Black Pete, his giant negro crew, made the houseboat *Euripides* fast to a convenient pile of wet lumber.

The *Euripides* had been on its way down the Mississippi from Galendale for something over a week and a half, for Shagbark had started as soon as he heard of the murder. The heavy craft had come at something better than a snail's pace, stopping now and then on the way, and the last previous stop had been at Buckgrove Landing, some six miles above Hardentown. Buckgrove Landing was where the murder had been done.

Old Shagbark had made the stop at Buckgrove Landing to allow his daughter Alice to go ashore and investigate, for she was his eyes and legs when he had a mystery on hand. At Buckgrove Landing, Alice had gone ashore with her satchel of Infallible Grease Remover, which was her excuse for getting into conversation with people, and it was understood she would not rejoin the boat until it reached



ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN

Hardentown. The plan, arranged by Shagbark, was that she should do her investigating at the scene of the crime and then climb the bluff and get to Hemmer's Corners as best she might. That was where the Pangburns lived. When she had learned all she could, she was to come across the River by the old steam ferry and rejoin her father—but now, as the big negro Pete made the boat fast to the lumber-pile at Hardentown, Shagbark looked in vain for Alice. She had not yet arrived.

The murder, of which Shagbark had read in the Galendale papers, was an unusual one, even as recorded by the newspapers when Shagbark first read of it. Crill Taggus and his shanty had been blown to atoms in an explosion so violent that the shanty was shattered to splinters and the shallow cellar scooped out entirely, leaving a deeper and wider hole. The murder had been done one stormy evening. The next day Ned Pangburn had appeared on the streets of Hardentown, so drunk he could hardly stagger, and had boasted of the murder. He had been arrested and thrown into jail, where he was still

held on a sixty-day sentence for being drunk and disorderly, closely watched by his lawyer Enoch Cargile.

Half an hour after the *Euripides* had landed, this man Cargile shuffled up the gangplank. Orlando, the monkeylike cook, was on the small fore-deck peeling potatoes, and he yelled for Shagbark.

"What do you want, dod-whix it?" growled Shagbark from the interior of the boat.

"There's a man out here wants to see you," piped Orlando.

"Who is he?" growled the mystery man.

"I'll be Ding-u-el J. Danged if I know who he is," answered Orlando. "He aint told me."

Cargile put his head inside the cabin door.

"Cargile—E. Cargile," he said. "I want to talk money to you."

"You come right on in, E. Cargile," said Shagbark.

THE MYSTERY MAN was stretched out on his caved-in sofa, idly smoking his cob pipe. He slid his feet to the floor, rubbed his hand over his matted hair and blinked at the door.

If there was in Hardentown a lawyer who, more than any other, received the unpleasant description of shyster lawyer, Cargile was that man. He had a thin, wolfish face, a scraggy beard, shifty eyes and bent shoulders. It was generally believed he would go as near the edge of crooked dealing as any man in town. More than once he had got Ned Pangburn out of trouble and had been well paid for it; and as soon as he had heard of the murder and of the arrest of Ned Pangburn, he had hurried to the jail and had made himself Ned Pangburn's protector.

Cargile had been well enough satisfied with what he had been able to do for his client until he heard of the arrival of the *Euripides*. He knew why Shagbark Jones had come to Hardentown at this moment. He knew that the old medicine faker meant to "solve" whatever there was of mystery in the murder, because that was Shagbark's way. A murder-mystery meant money to Shagbark Jones. The belief that Shagbark Jones could solve any mystery

on which he set his brain to work had spread up and down the Mississippi, and the news that he had arrived always meant crowds in attendance at his Anatomical Lecture and Grand Musical Entertainment, and big sales of Shagbark Oil and Shagbark Liniment. Cargile guessed that Shagbark had come to Hardentown to solve the Crill Taggus mystery.

"What dod-whilluxed right have you got to come botherin' me this time of day, hey?" asked Shagbark. "I don't allow nobody to bother me when I'm takin' my see-yester sleep."

"Now, hold on!" pleaded Cargile. "I've got money, Mr. Jones. You and me can understand each other. I'm the first to come to see you, aint I? I've got money. Money talks, hey?"

"It do sort of mingle in the conversation of real men now and then," said Shagbark more agreeably. "What is that money of yours tryin' to ejaculate, as you might say?"

"I came the minute I heard you were here," repeated Cargile. "That shows I believe in you, don't it? I know you're able to solve a mystery—any mystery—that ever happened in the United States—"

"In the world," said Shagbark.

"Yes, in the world!" said Cargile fawningly. "I know you've come to dig to the bottom of this Taggus murder—"

"And will," said Shagbark. "A one-horse little murder like this aint no trouble for me—aint hardly worth wastin' time on. Maybe in a couple of days I'll put in a minute or two solvin' it, if I take the notion, just to amuse the folks in town—"

"Yes, put in a minute, or something like that," said Cargile flatteringly. "So that is why I came down to see you. I'm this Ned Pangburn's lawyer, and it is my business to get him off. I've got money—"

"You come out onto the back deck," said Shagbark. "If that money is startin' to talk, it had better talk where it wont be too much overheard."

HE led the way to the after-deck, Cargile following. Black Pete was there, stretched at full length, asleep or seemingly so.

"Don't mind him," said Shagbark. "He's only a nigger. Now let's hear Mr. Money say something."

Black Pete opened his eyes and looked at the lawyer. The glossy brown negro looked especially unpleasant, for one eye was swollen and blackened.

"Lie down!" said Shagbark as the negro made an attempt to arise. "Go on, Mr. Dollars," he said to Cargile.

"Well, now," said Cargile, lowering his voice, "I don't know whether Ned Pangburn murdered this Crill Taggus or not."

"From all I hear," said Shagbark, "it's a sort of pity if he didn't, this Crill Taggus was such an ornery devil."

"Glad you feel that way," said Cargile. "Well, then, I do believe Ned Pangburn killed him. I speak right out, you see. I know you're going to find out all about it—you always do; so I speak right out."

"Yep, you speak," said Shagbark; "but I don't hear no loud words from that money."

"You will," said Cargile, moving a little closer and lowering his voice. "I know you are no fool. I know you are a mighty shrewd man. Now, I am speculating on this case; I'm taking my chances—making it a gamble. This Ned Pangburn don't seem to want to get free. He seems to want to have folks know he murdered Crill Taggus. He's proud of it. He brags about it. He says he wants folks to know that is the way a Pangburn treats an enemy. Well, he aint such a fool as he seems."

"Aint he?"

"No, he is not. And I'll tell you why: I guess you notice he's in the county jail here in Hardentown, and not in the county jail over in Buckgrove County, Illinois. And this is Iowa. Well, there are two reasons why he is here. They are afraid to have him in that little wooden jail over there, for fear the jail would be burnt down and Ned Pangburn rushed away. That's how afraid they are of the Pangburn Boys over there. So they leave him here. And the other reason is that he isn't in jail for murder at all. He is in jail for being drunk and disorderly. And the reason for that is that they haven't got enough proof yet that he did do a

murder. They haven't got the *corpus*."

"The what?"

"The *corpus*—the body. They can't find it. They can't find a trace of it. It was blown to more or less atoms. They can't find a piece big enough to prove it is what is left of Crill Taggus, and unless they do, they can't prove Crill Taggus was murdered, or that anybody was murdered."

"I reckon not," agreed Shagbark.

CARGILE watched his face with shrewd eyes.

"And that's where the mystery comes in, in this case, hey?" he asked.

"Seems so," agreed Shagbark noncommittally.

"Look here," said Cargile. "You know it is so! You know mighty well that that is what everybody is waiting for—to find a piece of Crill Taggus big enough to prove he is dead. And I know that is what you've got! I know you are a shrewd man, Jones, and I know you stopped at Buckgrove Landing two days. I can put two and two together, I can. You've got a piece of Crill Taggus somewhere. That's what you've got, and what you aim to do is to spring it on the crowd when you get ready. That's all the mystery there is to this case, and you wouldn't come here until you were ready to do some of your mystery stuff and say: 'Somebody look under that stone yonder,' or something like that, and there a piece of Crill Taggus will be! Sure! Certainly! And now money is going to talk."

"I been waitin' to hear it," drawled Shagbark.

"I've got two hundred dollars here," said Cargile, "that wants to get into your pocket. You go ahead and solve your mystery all you want to. Go ahead and say Ned Pangburn did it if you want to, but just you forget about any part of the *corpus* of Crill Taggus."

"Does the money crawl into my pocket now or later?" asked Shagbark. Cargile studied the hair-matted face before him.

"Now—if you'll agree not to spring any of Crill Taggus' dead body on us."

Shagbark turned his head and held the left pocket of his trousers open. For only an instant Cargile hesitated; then

he slipped the roll of bills into the pocket, laughed and turned to go.

"Blowed to more or less atoms," chuckled Shagbark. "I should say so! A bargain is a bargain!"

Cargile passed through the cabin and on up into the town.

"Pete, dod-whix it! we dassen't produce no dead *corpus* now," said Shagbark to the big negro, "an' so I guess I'll go in and wind up my see-yester nap." He left Black Pete chuckling.

ALICE came late that afternoon, on the last trip made by the ferry that day. It was not until after the evening Anatomical Lecture and Grand Musical Entertainment that she told Shagbark what she had learned.

"Folks talked plenty," she said. "You know how country-folks are, Dad; they were glad to talk about things to a stranger."

"They would talk to you, anyway, Allie," said her father. "What did you find out?"

"Well, nothing that you know about Crill Taggus," she said. "They don't know any of the things you know about him, Dad. Nobody said a word about that. They said he was good riddance. And about the Pangburns I learned all there was to know, I guess. I'm sorry for that poor Emily."

Anyone would have been sorry for poor Emily Taggus, scarred by smallpox and deserted by her husband—or rather, driven away by him. Her story, patched together from what Alice now told Shagbark and from what he had already learned, was the story of the murder of Crill Taggus.

Ned Pangburn was the youngest of the four Pangburn Boys,—Boys with a capital B, just as we might say the Pangburn Gang,—who were all evilly known in Hardentown and all through the Illinois country about Hemmer's Corners. They were nearly of an age and had been born on the Pangburn farm on the edge of the Illinois bluff, and the four had grown up together, three of

them husky, black-browed giants, and Ned lighter haired and slender. Before they were in their teens they were known as bad boys and dreaded as a nuisance, and their reputation grew worse as the boys grew.

Orley, the eldest, might have been merely a big, stupid farmer-boy if left to himself, but he was the oldest and made himself protector of the two next—John and Chris; and there was nothing good that could be said about John and Chris Pangburn. They were cruel and vindictive, delighting in deviltry. John was of the natural criminal type, and until Ned was big enough to toddle after his brothers, Orley made John his especial pet. Thus Orley was drawn into all sorts of evil affairs, and by the time Ned was a big boy, the Pangburn Boys were hated and dreaded everywhere. Chris was by nature the boaster and braggart of the family, and Ned might be called the boy led astray by bad example, although he certainly entered into the evil ways of his brothers willingly enough. By the time Orley was twenty-five and Ned eighteen,



"Yep, you speak," said Shagbark; "but I don't hear no loud words from that money."

the country people looked on the Pangburn Boys as outlaws to be dreaded and propitiated.

The girl Emily, youngest of the five, was a sweet child, and the worst that could be said of her was that she thought her brothers were the noblest fellows living. The father, old Dag Pangburn, was remembered as a bent-backed old man with a twisted leg, who went about his farming with a sour face and was reputed to be worth money. Until his boys were too big, he tried to keep them in order by knocking them down with his fist; after that they knocked him down when he displeased them. It was said that his death came about through some injury he received when Chris felled him with a wagon-spoke in some dispute. It was never known certainly. No one cared to incur the displeasure of the Pangburn Boys by investigating the story too closely.

The four boys worshiped little Emily. It was probably on her account that they hung around the farm instead of making for the West, some parts of which were then sufficiently wild to tempt them. Now and then one of the boys would disappear for a while, and it would be rumored that he was in the West, robbing trains or up to some other crime; but this was probably mere talk—no one could know. For the most part they hung about the farm, terrorizing the neighborhood and making excursions to Hardentown after bad whisky.

WHEN the Pangburn Boys had been younger, there were whole seasons when there was no school in their neighborhood, because they would not allow it; but the first serious affair in which their names were mentioned was the cattle affair. The four boys had been over to Hardentown to the county fair and were coming home on the crowded ferry when Ned, drunk like the rest, had begun offensively making love to a girl who was seated in a wagon beside her father. He had tried to pull the girl out of the wagon, and her father had taken his whipstock by the thin end and got rid of Ned by striking him across the forehead with the heavy hickory butt, dropping him in a bleeding heap on the ferry floor.

Ned's brothers would have killed the farmer had the ferry not been crowded and they overpowered; but a few nights later the four had gone to the farmer's house, dragged him out of bed, beat him cruelly and thrown him in his duck-pond, where they had left him. This had been bad enough, though it had had something of honest revenge in it; but they had not been satisfied and had gone to his pasture, where they had cut the leg-tendons of ten of his cows. Of course the four boys had had to go into hiding and no more had been heard of them for a year. Then, their father having settled with the injured farmer, the Pangburn Boys had returned and begun again their terrorization.

Now and then they had taken a companion or two but they had been so quarrelsome, except among themselves, that they had kept no pals long. Crill Taggus had been one of these occasional pals, soon discarded like the rest, but while running with them he had met Emily. The Pangburn Boys soon quarreled with him, and he had gone away and not been heard of for a year or two. In the meanwhile old Dag Pangburn had died, and the poor creature, his wife, had followed him. Then it had been discovered that the "money" old Pangburn had been reputed to have was little enough and that the farm was mortgaged for all it was worth. The Pangburn Boys had held a consultation. They would have left the country had it not been for Emily, but Orley had proposed that they put all their money together and buy the small general store at Hemmer's Corners. They had done this and deserted the farm, and Orley had buckled down to work with the dull steadiness of an ox.

He had not disliked it. The general opinion was that Orley would have been steady enough anyway, if it had not been for John and Chris, and the neighborhood had been glad enough to consider him a steady, respectable citizen at last. Once a week he had driven to Hardentown for supplies for his store, and he had never returned drunk. You can picture the big fellow behind his counter, weighing sugar or, after dark, working on his ledger as if he had never been a near-outlaw.

With John, Chris and Ned it had been another matter. Now one and now another had "helped out" in the store, but you might have seen John step behind a partition to take a swig out of his pocket whisky-flask, or heard Chris say to some young farmer: "Well, you better keep your jaw shut about that or you'll wake up some morning with your hide full of buckshot!" or seen Ned, when some enemy entered the store, stoop down to examine a revolver to see that it was in good working order in case the customer meant trouble.

The third helper in the store had been Emily, and her province had been the dry-goods and similar articles. Then one day she had disappeared and a letter had come to Orley saying she had run away with Crill Taggus and that they had been married at Galendale, up the River. Chris had loaded a revolver and had gone to Galendale to see about it, and came back with the word that Emily was all right enough and seemed happy and that Crill had a job on the Galendale Bridge, then building. He was doing ironwork and quite a fellow in the Union. Ned also had gone to Galendale and brought back about the same report, and then, a year later, Emily had come to the store at Hemmer's Corners carrying her baby, and had said Crill had beaten her and driven her out of the house. She had had the smallpox, and her face was pitted and scarred. John and Ned had gone to Galendale, and if they had found Crill they would have murdered him then, but they had not found him.

A YEAR after this Ned had somehow learned that Crill Taggus had been seen in Hardentown and traced him to

Buckgrove Landing. There can be no doubt that three of the Pangburn Boys had dogged his steps after that. Probably Crill Taggus had been quite unsuspecting that he was being watched. And then, one stormy night, his shanty had been blown to splinters, and Ned Pangburn boasted on the streets of

Hardentown that he had blown the wretch to atoms.

The sequel indicated that in making this drunken confession Ned Pangburn had not been as foolish as might at first appear. There had been no trace of Crill Taggus to be found, and without some proof that he was actually dead, there could be no proof that Ned had killed him; for, a day later, Orley, Chris and John

Pangburn had come to Hardentown and separately given themselves up for murdering Crill Taggus. The story each told was the same. Each said that he alone, without the knowledge of his brothers, had gone down to the lonely shack at Buckgrove Landing and had blown the shack and Crill Taggus to atoms.

"And don't Ned know anything about it?" each had been asked.

"Nobody knows anything about it but me," each had said, almost word for word alike. "Us Pangburns don't let nobody treat our sister bad. Anybody that hurts a Pangburn gets his, and we don't have to talk to one another about it. That's our rule. So I went down and blew the beast to kingdom come. I went alone. I didn't say anything to anybody. Nobody knew I was doing it."

"And what did you do it with?"

"I took three quarter-kegs of powder out of the store and blew him up."

This was what each had said, and practically what Ned Pangburn had



"I see Ned Pangburn goin' out on horseback to kill Crill Taggus."

said. Each had said the same. Each had confessed the deed and sworn no one else had had any part in it or any knowledge of it.

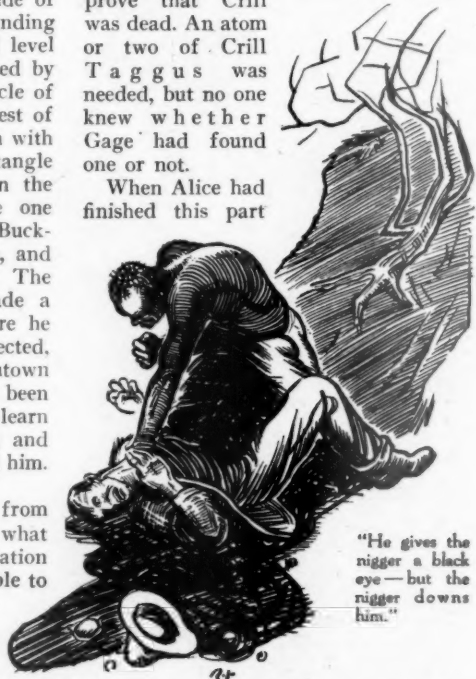
The shanty at Buckgrove Landing had been an ideal place for such a deed. Some six miles above Hardentown, there was no lonelier place on the River. Once the Landing had been quite a river station, but the Mississippi had long since swung her current to the other side of the valley, leaving Buckgrove Landing deserted. The five or six acres of level sand, just too high to be inundated by the annual floods, lay in a semicircle of bluffs which cut it off from the rest of the world. The flat was overgrown with willows and brush which made a tangle hard to work a way through. In the middle of this tangle stood the one shanty left from the days when Buckgrove Landing had been a village, and here Crill Taggus had "squatted." The willows along the river-bank made a hiding-place for his boat, and here he might have lived for years, unsuspected, had he not ventured into Hardentown once for supplies. That once had been sufficient for the Pangburn Boys to learn that he was in the neighborhood, and they had not rested until they found him.

ALL this Shagbark built together from what Alice told him and from what he knew. There was other information that Alice brought. If it was possible to convict Ned Pangburn, it was meant that he should be convicted. Safe in the jail, he had no fear of it. He did not believe any jury in his home county would dare bring in a verdict of guilty against a Pangburn, because the Pangburn revenges were too sure and too merciless, but Alice brought word that secretly and in deadly earnest the farmers had formed a sworn organization to convict Ned Pangburn if it could be done. They had hired Winston Gage, the cleverest lawyer in Hardentown, and Gage was using every effort to build up a case.

Gage had traced the explosive of which the four Pangburns spoke and had found its source and that it was missing from the Hemmer's Corners store. Like every country store, this one sold gunpowder,

and the wholesaler from whom it had been purchased readily admitted he had sold the Pangburns three quarter-kegs—eighteen and three quarter pounds in all—a few days before the murder. The powder was not now in the store. With the reason for the murder evident enough and the means thus made plain, it would be only necessary to fix the murder on a particular Pangburn and prove that Crill was dead. An atom or two of Crill Taggus was needed, but no one knew whether Gage had found one or not.

When Alice had finished this part



of her report, Shagbark sat puffing his pipe and thinking.

"You can sleep on the couch here, Allie," he said, "or you can go up to the hotel and have a nice bed, just as you like."

"Where'll you sleep?" she asked.

"I'll snooze just as well on the floor, I reckon," he said. "I'm a reg'lar snoozer, anywhere you put me. Allie!"

"Yes, Dad?"

"I sort of think I'll end up this mystery to-morrow night."

"You think the town-folks are interested enough?"

"We had a big crowd to-night, Allie.

I sold over sixty bottles of Oil, let alone the Liniment. I guess if I sort of hint around at to-morrow afternoon's Anatomical Lecture, we'll have plenty here to-morrow night. Five o'clock, wasn't it?"

"Five o'clock what, Dad?"

"Five o'clock was the time the murder was done, wasn't it?"

"Of course! You know that!"

"Just wanted to remind myself," said Shagbark. "And Allie?"

"Yes, Dad?"

"You didn't find anybody that saw a Pangburn going down the bluff road with a bag over his shoulder, did you?"

"No, nobody!"

"Nobody saw a Pangburn carrying anything that looked anyways like three little kegs of powder, I suppose, Allie?"

"Oh, Dad! Of course not! How could anyone?"

"Well, I guess then I've got all the proof I need to solve up this mystery with," Shagbark grinned. "I guess so!"

Alice laughed aloud.

"Pete!" called Shagbark to the negro, who was snoring on the rear-deck, "all neat and tidy for the night?"

"Fine and fit, Boss!"

"I'm going to sleep. —Orlando!"

"Hey?" queried the little cook from the fore-deck.

"I'm going to sleep."

"Well, go, then!" squeaked Orlando. "I wish I could, instead of gettin' rheumatism on this Dang-u-el J. Deck."

"I'm goin' to explode the mystery to-morrow night, Orlando."

"Well, I'm Etern-u-el J. Thankful for that, anyway," said Orlando. And then Alice stretched herself out on the caved-in sofa, and Shagbark lowered himself to the floor. In half an hour five snores—but Alice's was hardly more than a regular, deep breathing—sounded through the houseboat *Euripides*.

THE next evening the levee before the houseboat was crowded. The day had been hot, and the evening was more than warm. The news had passed about that Shagbark Jones was to solve the Crill Taggus mystery,—“pull off one of his mystery stunts” was the way it was mentioned as a rule,—and as the river-front was the coolest spot in town, any-

way, a crowd had poured itself down the streets upon the levee.

"Well, ladies and gents," Shagbark said when he came out upon the fore-deck of the *Euripides*, "the evening performance generally consists of my world-renowned Anatomical Lecture and Grand Musical Entertainment—"

"How about who killed Crill Taggus?" some one shouted.

"Comin' to that, my friend," Shagbark answered. "Give a feller time, dod-whix it! I'm goin' to tell you all about that, but first off I'm worried about this here world-famous cure for every ill the anatomy of man is heir to—referin' to Shagbark Oil, the price of which is one dollar a bottle. Until I sell five bottles of that great and glorious remedy, I can't talk on no other subject. Who wants the first bottle? This gentleman! And the next?"

The laughing crowd took the five bottles in an instant.

"Well, ladies and gents," said Shagbark in the deep voice that echoed back from the freight-cars far up the levee, "it aint no trick for me to solve mysteries. All I've got to do is to look into the crystal globe, and I can see the whole business. Orlando, fetch out the crystal globe, cut out of the solid lump of pure rock-crystal!"

"There aint none," piped Orlando.

"What!" cried Shagbark.

"Is you done forgot how that crystem globe roll off the deck an' sink, Boss?" asked Black Pete, exaggerating his dialect for the effect. "Dat globe in de bottom ob the Ribber."

"Well, dod-whillix if that aint so," shouted Shagbark. "I clean forgot it! But no matter! Orlando, fetch me a glass of water. —Ladies and gents, most folks has to have a crystal globe to see mysteries in, but old Shagbark, he don't. He can see 'em in a glass of water. So, whilst Orlando is gettin' a glass of water, we'll just sell about five bottles of Shagbark Oil, the greatest remedy for all aches and pains—"

Twenty hands went aloft. Twenty bottles of Shagbark Oil changed ownership before Orlando returned bearing the tumbler of water. Shagbark looked into it.

"I see four men," he shouted, staring

into the glass. "I see four men, four of the dad-blamedest liar-men I ever caught sight of in my life!"

A LAUGH went up.

"And I see three kegs of gunpowder—tiny kegs—what you call quarter-kegs," he shouted. "I see labels on them sayin' each and every keg holds six and a quarter pounds of gunpowder—eighteen and three quarter pounds in all."

"Go to it, Shagbark; you're the boy!" some one yelled.

"Now, just for that I can't see no more," said Shagbark. "And I won't be able to see more until I've sold five more bottles of—"

"Here!" and "Here!" cried men in the crowd.

"Now I can see!" shouted Shagbark. "I see a place up to Buckgrove Landing where there has been an explosion—an explosion of gunpowder or dynamite or something. There's a hole in the ground where a shanty used to be. It's a big hole. Now I see the explosion! It is a stormy evening—a thunderstorm. I see the shanty. I see the explosion. It is a rip-snorter—it throws the shanty a hundred feet in the air and tears it to splinters. It blows the willow trees up by the roots!"

"Do you see who did it?" some one shouted.

"Now I don't see nothing," said Shagbark sadly. "I can't see nothing at all—"

"Here's a dollar," laughed some one in the crowd. Orlando handed out the Shagbark Oil. When five bottles had been taken, Shagbark's eyes suddenly improved. He stared down into the tumbler of water.

"I see a man startin' out on horseback," he declared. "It aint Crill Taggus, and he aint startin' out from the shanty. And now I see Crill Taggus. He is climbin' in at a back window somewhere. And now I see a mighty big iron bridge—it aint finished yet—men are workin' on it. And now I see who that is that is startin' out on horseback. It is Ned Pangburn."

He hesitated.

"Here, I'll take five bottles. Go on," said some one in the crowd.

"You git six bottles for five dollars," said Shagbark. "And now I see a man in a skiff—he is rowing up the River. A big black nigger starts out from a houseboat after him in another skiff; the nigger runs him to shore, and they have a fight; and he gives the nigger a black eye—but the nigger downs him. And now I see one end of that iron bridge again, and it is wrecked—an explosion has wrecked it. And now I see a man getting money from another man—money for gunpowder or for dynamite, I can't make out which."

"I'll take six bottles," cried some one as Shagbark paused.

"Thanks! And my eyes are gettin' better all the time," said Shagbark. "Because now I can see right into a man's mind, and I can see him thinking. I can see him thinkin' there ought to be good money in havin' a supply of gunpowder and dynamite to sell to men who want to murder and kill. I can see him thinkin' he knows the very place, hid away below the bluffs, where he could keep his gunpowder and dynamite hid. I see him stealin' gunpowder and giant powder and dynamite from the powder-houses of the wholesale folks, and from stores, and takin' it to his shanty to hide it. I see him sellin' it to evil-minded folks now and again. I see a ton of it, maybe, in the cellar of his shanty."

"Go ahead, Shagbark! Here's a five for six bottles!"

"I see them four Pangburn Boys murderous mad over the way Crill Taggus treated their sister," said Shagbark. "I see Ned Pangburn goin' out on horseback to kill Crill Taggus. I see Ned get off and hide in the bushes for Crill Taggus to show up, and I see Crill Taggus hidin' in the wood-lot back of the Pangburn store, waitin' for night to come on so he can bust into the store and steal what gunpowder may be in the store. I see Orley Pangburn shut up the store and start out after Ned with Chris and John, and Crill Taggus busting into the store. I see Crill Taggus climb out of the back window with them three quarter-kegs of gunpowder that he is going to add to his stock down at his shanty. And then I see that explosion again. I see it rip the shanty to bits and tear up the earth and throw

down the willows in a way beside which all the damage three quarter-kegs could do would be like nothing at all."

"GO on! Go on!" a hundred voices demanded.

"I see Crill Taggus, scared lest folks know by the explosion what business he had been in, drop the three quarter-kegs of powder in the wood-lot back of the Pangburn store and run. I see Ned Pangburn, drunk, stare at the hole where Crill's shanty had been and get madder and madder because he thought Crill had gone to death on his own hook and escaped a Pangburn vengeance. I see him comin' to Hardentown and braggin' he had killed Crill Taggus. I see them three other liar-men, his brothers, comin' to tell a like lie to save Ned's neck. I see folks huntin' the place around the wrecked shanty to find more or less atoms of Crill Taggus' corpse, and I see—"

He paused.

"What do you see, Shagbark?" the waiting crowd called to him.

"Well, I don't see nothin' just now,"

the burly old medicine faker said. "Seems like I'd got to wait a minute until Pete comes out. Just about a minute, and I aint got no watch, so I figure time by Shagbark Oil. I figger a minute is about twenty bottles—three bottles to the second is about the time it takes me and Orlando to hand it out and take in the money. Thank you! And thank you, sir! And you!"

He turned and dropped the money into the box behind him.

"And now," he said, "I see there aint no murder, and I see there aint no corpse in atoms of more or less size, and there aint no more mystery because I see— Pete! fetch him out!"

Bound and gagged, stiff from having been tied down on Alice's bed in her little partitioned-off room, and wholly supported by Black Pete, Crill Taggus was thrust out of the cabin upon the deck.

"Because I see this here Crill Taggus is still alive," said Shagbark, "because he was lucky enough to be out tryin' to steal gunpowder when the lightning struck his shack."



Somewhere in Texas

By H. A. Shands

WELL, sir, it was a funny thing. The first that Bill Hoskins and me knowed about it, Tommy Luter come lopin' by the shack and told us.

He says to me, says he: "John, you and Bill are invited to a weddin'; did you know about it?"

"No," says I, "we aint heard of it yet. Who's goin' to git married? But I reckon Bill's too bashful to go to a weddin' anyhow, if he does hang around old man Simpkins' store now and again."

"It's me," says Tommy, "—me and Miss Maggie Simpkins. We been

thinkin' about it for some time, but old man Simpkins has been havin' the rheumatiz somethin' awful here lately, and you know he always did have the bronkeetus. We been sorter waitin' on the old gent' to git better or somethin'. But it looks like he's done made up his mind to stay like he is. So Miss Maggie and me jus' 'lowed we wouldn't wait no longer. She told me I must be shore to have you and Bill come to the weddin'. And I wants you there too. I aint never forgot what Bill done for me when I was a plumb goner."

"When's this here auspicious event comin' off, Tommy?" says Bill.

"Day after to-morrer night," says Tommy. "Me and Miss Maggie feel plumb downhearted about the printed invites. We orders 'em, all right, from Dallas, but on account of 'em gittin' the first lot *Thomas Cuter*, instid of *Luter*, we had to send 'em back. Miss Maggie just as good as says she'll be durned if she's goin' to marry a feller named *Luter* and have *Cuter* printed on the cards. She says if she'd wanted to marry a man named *Cuter*, she'd 'a' done it. But she aint wanted to, and therefore she aint goin' to. Miss Maggie's an awful smart girl."

BILL was tryin' to talk mighty ca'm-like, but he couldn't keep from turnin' red, all the same.

"Yes," he says, "I reckon so. Miss Maggie is an awful smart young lady, but what I always liked about her was her style and her looks."

"Yes," says Tommy. "Them's two things she shore has got. Why, when I says to her, says I, jus' a-askin' of her, you know, what we was goin' to do with them invites if they didn't come in time for the weddin', it didn't stall her for a minute. She spoke right up, and she says, says she: 'We'll jus' use 'em for announcements. They's really more stylish,' she says, 'announcements is, than invites, anyhow, these days.' You know, Bill, that's always what I have said about a girl as has got style; you can't lose her on no part of the ground. Jus' let somethin' turn up that's unexpected, and the first thing you know, she's turned it right around into somethin' stylish. And as

for looks, if I do say it, there aint no two-year-old in Tom Green County as can hold a light to her. No sir, there aint nuthin' prettier as walks on the ground in Tom Green County than that there same Miss Maggie Simpkins. Take her eyes, now, Bill, and look at 'em. You aint never seen no eyes like 'em. Danged if you couldn't find Miss Maggie in the dark jus' by her eyes. And where in Sam Hill would you find any hair like Miss Maggie's got? Jus' tell me that, Bill. If you was goin' to look around for hair like Miss Maggie's, now, jus' tell me—"

"Look here, Tommy," says Bill: "was you comin' over here special to invite John and me, or are you goin' around invitin' folks in general?"

"I tell you I'm goin' around on account of the invites bein' printed wrong," says Tommy. "But as I was a-sayin'—"

"Well, scoot along, then," says Bill; "you aint never goin' to git nobody invited if you take all day invitin' John and me. We are comin', all right; so hike out."

"You're right," says Tommy; "I better be goin', but did you ever particular notice Miss Maggie's arms? I'm jus' askin' you that. But maybe you aint never seen her with her sleeves rolled up. I tell you, boys—"

WELL, Bill was standin' there with his quirt in his hand, and he come down with it *kerwhop* 'cross the rump of Tommy's pony. That pony jumped about ten feet, and come mighty nigh spillin' Tommy on the ground. He was jus' kinder standin' in the stirrup with one leg and had the other one throwed loose-like 'cross the saddle. He jus' did ketch by the horn, but he didn't have time to say nuthin'. That pony lit out like he had some pressin' business at the other end of the line.

"Jus' like that fool Tommy Luter to git the prettiest-lookin' woman around here!" says Bill. "Talk! that feller must talk in his sleep. And when it comes to sayin' anything, I aint never heard him say anything yet."

"Well," says I, "a fool for luck! And the way I figgers it out, women is a kind of luck. You can't count on 'em

to do thisaway or thataway, jus' because it's reasonable or aint. They jus' happen, women does."

"I don't know about that," says Bill; "but it looks to me like a funny happen-so that Miss Maggie ever would've took up with a danged gas-bag like Tommy Luter. And then he aint got no sense."

"Look here, Bill," says I: "I didn't have no real idea that you was gittin' sweet on Miss Maggie."

"Do you mean to tell me that Tommy Luter's got any sense?" says Bill.

"Oh, no," says I. "I wouldn't go as far as that. You know as well as I do that he thinks you are the biggest man in Texas. But what I was aimin' at was that marryin' aint got nuthin' to do with sense, one way or the other. Sensible folks does it, and unsensible folks does it. So you needn't feel so bad."

"Feel bad!" says Bill. "Lord! I aint feelin' bad. If a woman wants to go and throw herself away, let her; that's all I've got to say."

"I feels sorry for you, Bill," says I, "but I reckon we couldn't hardly kidnap Miss Maggie in this day and time, and you never would git up the spunk to ask her."

"Look here, John," says Bill: "I've done got enough of this; so shut up!"

I seen Bill wasn't fitten to associate with no longer; so I jumped on my pony and went on down to ride the south fence, bein' as I was gittin' ready to start there anyhow when Tommy Luter come by.

It was on a Wednesday that the weddin' was. Bill and me dresses up pretty particular and rides over. It was about three mile and a long half from our shack to old man Simpkins' over in the aide of Bucksnot. You see, in them days Bucksnot wasn't much of a place, and old man Simpkins wasn't much of a man. As far as that goes, Bucksnot aint much yet. Old man Simpkins run a sort of little store, and had the bronkeetus or somethin' stiddy. He was one of these here long, thin old fellers, kinder bowed out in the back and bowed in in the front. If I do say it, that old man could outcough a steam

engine goin' up-grade. He had chin-whiskers, and his jaws was sunk in, but he shore was a laster. I will say that for him. Everybody kept on expectin' him to die, but he jus' let 'em expect.

Now, Miss Maggie, she was different. She was plump, you know—not to say fat, but sorter aidgin' up toward it a little. She didn't go too far; nor she didn't stop too quick. Run up on the scales, she'd jus' about knocked out a hundred and thirty or maybe thirty-five. She was a good-looker, and as healthy as they make 'em. How she ever come to have such a pa I never could make out. Her eyes was black and mighty bright, and her hair wasn't far from red. Her and the old man had been a-runnin' the store for a year or so. I think they come from out toward Alabama or Mississippi. But howsomever that may be, nearly all the boys was stuck on Miss Maggie.

Old man Simpkins' house had four rooms in it, which was a considerable house for them times. When me and Bill rides up, the old man was a-settin' on the front porch coughin' and a-wheezin' jus' like the grade was about sixty feet to the mile and him with a big load on behind. It was jus' gittin' dark good.

"Git down, boys, and light," says he between coughs. "They're gittin' ready fur the shindig inside. Set on the steps there. They done took all the cheers and put 'em in my room, and moved my bed out. They got me settin' out here in the damp, and I can't hardly stand it, but of course nobody don't keer nuthin' about old folks."

You see, we hadn't had no rain hardly for about two years, but that was jus' the way with old man Simpkins. The whole country was dry as a powderhorn. The range was nigh burnt up. And he was settin' out there complainin' of dampness. It made me mad.

"You ought to have a umbrella, Mr. Simpkins," says I.

"Naw," says Mr. Simpkins, "I reckon I don't need no umbrella, but what does that feller Tommy Luter amount to, anyhow? I can't see nuthin' in Tommy Luter. He aint got no money to speak of, and he aint got no sense at all."

I was kinder surprised when old Bill speaks up and says: "Well, I don't know about Tommy. He aint so bad, Tommy aint, and maybe he aint such a fool as he gits the credit of bein'."

I know now that Bill was takin' up for Tommy on the ground that he was goin' to be Miss Maggie's husband. Bill was jus' that kind of a feller; he wouldn't stand for nuthin' against them he likes.

"Well," says old man Simpkins, "they aint nobody got any sympathy for sick folks that's all the time coughin' their lungs out, not to say nuthin' about liver trouble. I see that. No sir, the only place for sufferin' old people is under the ground. But they aint goin' to git me there so quick as some of 'em counts on."

"You're wrong there, Mr. Simpkins," says I, thinkin' that wasn't no kind of talk for a weddin'; "you're wrong. There aint nobody wants you to cash in. Me and Bill gives you five years yet, five good years—don't we, Bill?"

"Five years!" says the old man. "Humph! Much obliged to you and Bill. I gives myself ten—ten and maybe some to spare."

I thought I had been awful liberal with the old man, but there wasn't no use in quarrelin' about it, and jus' then Tommy Luter and a bunch of fellers and some women-folks come ridin' up, with the preacher kinder trailin' on behind.

"Git down, git down," says the old man. "I reckon they're mighty nigh ready inside by this time. They done took all of the cheers into my room, and they've took down my bed and moved it onto the back porch. They've got me out here in the damp."

"Where's the bride?" says some of the women-folks, not payin' us men no mind.

"She's in there," says old man Simpkins, "gittin' ready. Some of the gals is with her. Jus' go on in, and you'll find her. But I reckon the men-folks better set down on the aide of the gallery till the word is give. There aint no tellin' what the world is comin' to. Here they've got me staked out here in the damp so's Maggie can marry Tommy

Luter. For the life of me I can't see how she is goin' to be no better off after she's done it."

Tommy Luter, he turned kinder red in the face, and the women-folks went on inside. Then the preacher comes up and shakes hands with the old man, sayin': "I trust the abidin' mercy of the Lord is still with you, Brother Simpkins."

"I don't know about that," says the old man, not bein' so very religious. "It kinder looks like He might've done better by me. Here I've got the rheumatiz and the bronkeetus, and I'm about to git Tommy Luter."

"Remember, Brother Simpkins," says the preacher, "the Lord chasteneth whom He loveth."

"He must be plumb stuck on me, then," says the old man, and busted out a-coughin'.

ONE of the ladies come to the door and says: "It's time fur the men-folks to come in."

We all went in and set down on the cheers that was fixed around three sides of the room. Then Mrs. Henderson says to the preacher: "You come and stand over here, Brother Morehead, and I'll go and bring in the bride."

There was a wreath made out of flowers up at that end of the room a-hangin' down from the ceilin'. The parson went over there and stood sorter under the aide of the wreath. Where they got them flowers in that dry time I don't know. Maybe they was made out of paper. Anyway, they looked pretty good by lamplight. Tommy Luter was settin' down there between me and Bill jus' like the rest of us. Bill, bein' sorter nervous, nudges him in the side with his elbow and whispers: "Tommy, aint it about time you was doin' somethin'?"

"I don't know," Tommy whispers back. "I'm a-waitin' to hear the word."

"Shucks!" says Bill. "Git up and go over there where the preacher is, so's you can receive the bride."

Tommy got up and started. 'Bout the time he got in reachin' distance of the preacher, Mrs. Henderson popped in again, and she says: "It aint time yet fur the groom to come forward."

It seemed like Tommy didn't know what to do; so he jus' stood up there and looked all around him, like he was a-lookin' for his cheer but couldn't find it nowhere. I never did want to laugh out loud so bad, but of course we had to be polite, bein' as it was a weddin'. At last the preacher took Tommy by the arm and led him back to his seat. Tommy set there a minute or two and studied. Then he half turns to Bill and whispers: "You played thunder with me, didn't you?"

"I didn't mean no harm," says Bill. "It seems to me like you ought to have somethin' to say about this thing."

"No, I reckon not, right now," says Tommy, "but I'll have somethin' to say later on, all right. You jus' look out for me, when the time comes."

THE bride come in. She was dressed up in white. Mrs. Henderson had her by the arm and led her under the wreath.

Miss Maggie was a-standin' there lookin' good enough to eat. She wasn't sayin' nuthin', but when her eyes fell on Tommy, she sorter nodded at him and blushed. When I seen that, I didn't want to be nowhere except standin' right up there before all them people with my arm around Miss Maggie.

I couldn't quite see why Tommy didn't go a-runnin'. But he raised up and says: "This here weddin' aint what you call a fixed and sot thing. Miss Maggie promised to marry me on one condition. That's what my talkin' done for me. One day I was talkin' mighty big—"

"That's all you ever did do," broke in old man Simpkins, "—just talk big. Maggie, what's the straight of this here thing?"

"I was talkin' mighty big," Tommy went on, "about wrastlin'. So when I asked Miss Maggie to marry me, she says she'll do it if, wrastlin' fair, I can throw any man at the weddin' in an all-holts ketch, if any man should keer to come forward and try me. So I challenges the whole lay-out."

You may know we was all riled up. Hadn't none of us expected nuthin' like that. Everybody was a-settin' there with their necks stretched out listenin'

like a lot of wild turkeys on a roost when they hear your gun cock. We was all plumb interested—you can bet your life on that.

Then everybody turned their eyes on old Bill settin' there by me. We all knowed he was the best wrastler in the county, bar none. But Bill was awful bashful before the ladies. He jus' set there like he was locoed. It looked like Tommy Luter was goin' to git the bride by default, as the lawyers say. Then everybody begun to whisper, so there was quite a buzz goin' around.

"Shucks!" says I, standin' up. "All of us knows that Bill Hoskins is the best wrastler in this room or anywheres else. So I nominates Bill, and I move that we make it unanimous."

Then all the men-folks says: "Hooray! go to it, Bill!" And the women-folks clapped their hands.

Old Bill fidgeted around in that cheer like it was stuck to him somehow and he couldn't git loose from it noway. bein' that bashful. Me and two or three more fellers yanked him up and drug him out to the middle of the room. Bill's face was as red as a chile-pod.

"Here's your champeen," says I. "Come on, Tommy, and do your durndest."

I will say fur Tommy that he come up like he was game. He knowed that, barrin' accidents, he didn't have no more chance against Bill than a prairie-dog against a rattlesnake, but he come on jus' the same.

IT wasn't much of a wrastlin'-match considered in itself. Old Bill jus' wropped hisself round Tommy like a centipede round a katydid, and slammed him against the floor so hard he come mighty nigh jarrin' the bridal-wreath down from the ceilin'. Then he says: "I hope you'll scuse me, Tommy; I didn't know I was tryin' so hard." Them was the first words Bill had said sence we started on him, but old Bill always was a gentleman.

Tommy got up as quick as he could. "Twasn't fair," he said. "You grabbed me before I got ready."

"If you aint satisfied," says I, appointin' myself referee, "you can try it again."

But Miss Maggie, she speaks up and she says: "No, it was perfectly fair. I don't want anybody to get hurt." And she looked at Bill. Lord, man! You ought to seen how she looked at Bill. Jus' one look! But I knowed, and Bill knowed, and so did everybody else, what that look was a-sayin'.

Then Tommy said, talkin' to Miss Maggie: "I see how it was now. You knowed Bill Hoskins was the best wrestler in this county, and that's why you was so anxious to be shore and git him here to-night."

Bill turned on him mighty quick and grabbed his shirt-bosom, sorter holdin' him off at good hittin'-distance. "Shut up!" he bellered at him. "Shut up! If you say another word to her, I'll mash your face off."

Then I steps up between 'em. "None of this, Bill," says I. "Miss Maggie's a-waitin' for you." And then, without hardly knowin' what I was doin', I pulled Bill's holt loose from Tommy and led Bill right up under the wreath 'longside of Miss Maggie. "The best man wins," says I.

Old Bill had been havin' so many feelin's mixed up in him so quick-like, that he jus' stood there a-shootin' his eyes thisaway and that for mighty nigh a minute, I reckon. Then he says: "Miss Maggie, is it—is it—" and looked like he couldn't git no further.

"Yes," says Miss Maggie, a-blushin' all over again, "—on one condition."

"What's that?" says old man Simpkins.

"That you agree, Daddy, for Mr. Luter to have the store," says Miss Maggie.

"He can have it," says old man Simpkins. "I'll make him a free gift of it. Anything to git shet of him."

"But what about the license?" says Brother Morehead. "I can't marry Brother Hoskins on Brother Luter's license."

"Here's the license," says Tommy, handin' it over. "Read it."

THE parson opened it up and run his eye over it. "Well, I'll be," he stuttered, and then picked himself up again, "blessed! These here licenses calls for William Randolph Hoskins. I don't understand it."

"Most folks says I am a fool," says Tommy, "and I reckon I am, about talkin' and gassin' too much. And my ideas somehow don't always seem to gee. But I seen that old Bill was plumb gone on Miss Maggie, and was jus' too bashful-like to speak up. So I been a-thinkin' that maybe some feller that don't amount to nuthin' would slip in and git Miss Maggie right from under his nose. So I put the case to Miss Maggie, and I seen she was willin', not to say waitin', and I fixed up this here plan mostly, 'ceptin' that Miss Maggie put on some of the fine p'int. And I wishes to say that I aint never forgot how old Bill staked me when I was plumb strapped and down and out. And I don't want no store. I don't want no pay for doin' the best job I ever done."

Well, sir, the thing busted loose then. The men-folks was hollerin' hooray for everybody; the women-folks was a-cryin'; and old man Simpkins was outcoughin' the original cougher from Coughersville. Such a hand-shakin' and a huggin' and a back-slappin' you never seen.

At last Bill makes himself heard above the rumpus: "Tommy, you got to take that store," he says. "I can support my wife and her pa. You are the best friend I ever had."

This last, comin' from old Bill, made me feel sorter bad, but I couldn't really blame him none. Couldn't nobody've looked at Miss Maggie then and blamed him. He had what you might call a perfect excuse.



A SON OF KAZAN

Continued from page 552 of this issue.

The clouds drifted away from under the stars and the moon, and for a long time Baree and Maheegun stood without moving, looking down from the bald crest of a ridge upon a wonderful world.

Never had they seen so far, except in the light of day. Under them was a plain. They could see its forests, lone trees that stood up like shadows out of the snow, a stream—still unfrozen—shimmering like glass with the flicker of firelight on it. Toward this stream Baree led the way. He no longer thought of Nepeese, and he whined with pent-up happiness as he stopped halfway down and turned to muzzle Maheegun. He wanted to roll in the snow and frisk about with his companion; he wanted to bark, to put up his head and howl as he had howled at the Red Moon back at the cabin.

Something held him from doing these things. Perhaps it was Maheegun's demeanor. She accepted his attentions frigidly. Once or twice she had seemed almost frightened; twice Baree had heard the sharp clicking of her teeth since they had mounted the ridge. Last night, and all through to-night's storm, their companionship had grown more intimate, but now there was taking its place a mysterious aloofness on the part of Maheegun. Pierrot could have explained. With the white snow under and about him, and the luminous moon and stars above him, Baree, like the night, had undergone a transformation. His coat was like polished jet. Every hair in his body glistened black. *Black!* That was it. And Nature was trying to tell Maheegun that of all the creatures hated by her kind, the creature which they feared and hated most was black. With her it was not experience, but instinct—telling her of the age-old feud between the gray wolf and the black bear. And Baree's coat, in the moonlight and the snow, was blacker than Wakayoo's had ever been in the fish-fattening days of May. Until they struck the broad open-

ings of the plain, the young she-wolf had followed Baree without hesitation; now there was a gathering strangeness and indecision in her manner, and twice she stopped and would have let Baree go on without her.

AN hour after they entered the plain there came suddenly out of the west the tonguing of the wolf-pack. It was not far distant, probably not more than a mile along the foot of the ridge, and the sharp, quick yapping that followed the first outburst was evidence that the long-fanged hunters had put up sudden game, a caribou or young moose, and were close at its heels. At the voice of her own people Maheegun laid her ears close to her head and was off like an arrow from a bow.

The unexpectedness of her movement and the swiftness of her flight put Baree well behind her in the race over the plain. She was running blindly, favored by luck. For an interval of perhaps five minutes the pack were so near to their game that they made no sound, and the chase swung full into the face of Maheegun and Baree. The latter was not half a dozen lengths behind the young wolf when a crashing in the brush directly ahead stopped them so sharply that they tore up the snow with their braced forefeet and squat haunches. Ten seconds later a caribou burst through and flashed across an open not more than twenty yards from where they stood. They could hear its swift panting as it disappeared. And then came the pack.

At sight of those swiftly moving gray bodies Baree's heart leaped for an instant into his throat. He forgot Maheegun, and that she had run away from him. The moon and the stars went out of existence for him. He no longer sensed the chill of the snow under his feet. He was wolf—all wolf. With the warm scent of the caribou in his nostrils, and the passion to kill sweeping

through him like fire, he darted after the pack.

Even at that, Maheegun was a bit ahead of him. He did not miss her; in the excitement of his first chase he no longer felt the desire to have her at his side. Very soon he found himself close to the flanks of one of the gray monsters of the pack; half a minute later a new hunter swept in from the bush behind him, and then a second, and after that a third. At times he was running shoulder to shoulder with his new companions; he heard the whining excitement in their throats, the snap of their jaws as they ran—and in the golden moonlight ahead of him the smash of the caribou as it plunged through thickets and over windfalls in its race for life.

It was as if Baree had belonged to the pack always. He had joined it naturally, as other stray wolves had joined it from out of the bush; there had been no ostentation, no welcome such as Maheegun had given him in the open, and no hostility. He belonged with these slim, swift-footed outlaws of the old forests, and his own jaws snapped and his blood ran hot as the smell of the caribou grew heavier, and the sound of its crashing body nearer.

It seemed to him they were almost at its heels when they swept into an open plain, a stretch of barren without a tree or a shrub, brilliant in the light of the stars and moon. Across its unbroken carpet of snow sped the caribou a spare hundred yards ahead of the pack. Now the two leading hunters no longer followed directly in the trail, but shot out at an angle, one to the right and the other to the left of the pursued, and like well-trained soldiers the pack split in halves and spread out fan-shape in the final charge.

The two ends of the fan forged ahead and closed in, until the leaders were running almost abreast of the caribou, with fifty or sixty feet separating them from the pursued. Thus, adroitly and swiftly, with deadly precision, the pack had formed a horseshoe cordon of fangs from which there was but one course of flight—straight ahead. For the caribou

to swerve half a degree to the right or left meant death. It was the duty of the leaders to draw in the ends of the horseshoe now, until one or both of them could make the fatal lunge for the hamstrings. After that it would be a simple matter. The pack would close in over the caribou like an inundation.

Baree had found his place in the lower rim of the horseshoe, so that he was fairly well in the rear when the climax came. The plain made a sudden dip. Straight ahead was the gleam of water—water shimmering softly in the star-glow, and the sight of it sent a final great spurt of blood through the caribou's bursting heart. Forty seconds would tell the story—forty seconds of a last spurt for life, of a final tremendous effort to escape death. Baree felt the sudden thrill of these moments, and he forged ahead with the others in that lower rim of the horseshoe as one of the leading wolves made a lunge for the young bull's hamstring. It was a clean miss. A second wolf darted in. And this one also missed.

There was no time for others to take their place. From the broken end of the horseshoe Baree heard the caribou's heavy plunge into water. When Baree joined the pack, a maddened, mouth-frothing, snarling horde, Napamoos, the young bull, was well out in the river and swimming steadily for the opposite shore.

IT was then that Baree found himself at the side of Maheegun. She was panting; her red tongue hung from her open jaws; but at his presence she brought her fangs together with a snap and slunk from him into the heart of the wind-run and disappointed pack. The wolves were in an ugly temper, but Baree did not sense the fact. Nepeese had trained him to take to water like an otter, and he did not understand why this narrow river should stop them as it had. He ran down to the water and stood belly deep in it, facing for an instant the horde of savage beasts above him, wondering why they did not follow. And he was black—black. He came among them again, and for the first time they noticed him.

The restless movements of the waters ceased now. A new and wondering interest held them rigid. Fangs closed sharply. A little in the open Baree saw Maheegun, with a big gray wolf standing near her. He went to her again, and this time she remained with flattened ears until he was sniffing her neck. And then, with a vicious snarl, she snapped at him. Her teeth sank deep in the soft flesh of his shoulder, and at the unexpectedness and pain of her attack, he let out a yelp. The next instant the big gray wolf was at him.

Again caught unexpectedly, Baree went down with the wolf's fangs at his throat. But in him was the blood of Kazan, the flesh and bone and sinew of Kazan, and for the first time in his life he fought as Kazan fought on that terrible day at the top of the Sun Rock. He was young; he had yet to learn the cleverness and the strategy of the veteran; but his jaws were like the iron clamps with which Pierrot set his bear traps, and in his heart was a sudden and blinding rage, a desire to kill that rose above all sense of pain or fear.

That fight, if it had been fair, would have been a victory for Baree, even in his youth and inexperience. In fairness the pack should have waited; it was a law of the pack to wait—until one was done for. But Baree was black; he was a stranger, an interloper, a creature whom they noticed now in a moment when their blood was hot with the rage and disappointment of killers who have missed their prey. A second wolf sprang in, striking Baree treacherously from the flank; and while he was in the snow, his jaws crushing the foreleg of his first foe, the pack was on him *en masse*.

Such an attack on the young caribou bull would have meant death in less than a minute. Every fang would have found its hold. Baree, by the fortunate circumstance that he was under his first two assailants and protected by their bodies, was saved from being torn instantly into pieces. He knew that he was fighting for his life. Over him the horde of beasts rolled and twisted and snarled; he felt the burning pain of teeth sinking into his flesh; he was smothered; a

hundred knives seemed cutting him into pieces; yet no sound—not a whimper or a cry—came from him now in the horror and hopelessness of it all.

It would have ended in another half-minute had the struggle not been at the very edge of the bank. Undermined by the erosion of the spring floods, a section of this bank suddenly gave way, and with it went Baree and half the pack. In a flash Baree thought of the water and the escaping caribou. For a bare instant the cave-in had sent him free of the pack, and in that space he gave a single leap over the gray backs of his enemies into the deep water of the stream. Close behind him half a dozen jaws snapped shut on empty air. As it had saved the caribou, so this strip of water shimmering in the glow of the moon and stars saved Baree.

THE stream was not more than a hundred yards in width, but it cost Baree close to a losing struggle to get across it. Until he dragged himself out on the opposite shore, the extent of his hurts was not impressed upon him fully. One hind leg, for the time, was useless; his forward left shoulder was laid open to the bone; his head and body were torn and cut; and as he dragged himself slowly away from the stream, the trail he left in the snow was a red path of blood. It trickled from his panting jaws, between which his tongue was bleeding; it ran down his legs and flanks and belly, and it dripped from his ears, one of which was slit clean for two inches as though cut with a knife. His instincts were dazed, his perception of things clouded as if by a veil drawn close over his eyes. He did not hear, a few minutes later, the howling of the disappointed wolf-horde on the other side of the river, and he no longer sensed the existence of moon or stars. Half dead, he dragged himself on until by chance he came to a clump of dwarf spruce. Into this he struggled, and then he dropped exhausted.

All that night and until noon the next day Baree lay without moving. The fever burned in his blood; it flamed high and swift toward death; then it ebbed slowly, and life conquered. At noon

he came forth. He was weak, and he wobbled on his legs. His hind leg still dragged, and he was racked with pain. But it was a splendid day. The sun was warm; the snow was thawing; the sky was like a great blue sea; and the flood of life coursed warmly again through Baree's veins. But now, for all time, his desires were changed, and his great quest at an end.

A red ferocity grew in Baree's eyes as he snarled in the direction of last night's fight with the wolves. They were no longer his people. They were no longer of his blood. Never again could the hunt-call lure him or the voice of the pack rouse the old longing. In him there was a thing newborn, an undying hatred for the wolf, a hatred that was to grow in him until it became like a disease in his vitals, a thing ever present and insistent, demanding vengeance on their kind. Last night he had gone to them a comrade. To-day he was an outcast. Cut and maimed, bearing with him scars for all time, he had learned his lesson of the wilderness. To-morrow, and the next day, and for days after that without number, he would remember the lesson well.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT the cabin on the Gray Loon, on the fourth night of Baree's absence, Pierrot was smoking his pipe after a great supper of caribou tenderloin he had brought in from the trail, and Nepeese was listening to his tale of the remarkable shot he had made, when a sound at the door interrupted them. Nepeese opened it, and Baree came in. The cry of welcome that was on the girl's lips died there instantly, and Pierrot stared as if he could not quite believe this creature that had returned was the wolf-dog. Three days and nights of hunger in which he could not hunt because of the leg that dragged had put on him the marks of starvation. Battle-scarred and covered with dried blood-clots that still clung tenaciously to his long hair, he was a sight that drew at last a long breath from Nepeese. A queer smile was growing in Pierrot's face as he leaned forward in

his chair; and then slowly rising to his feet and looking closer, he said to Nepeese:

"Ventre Saint Gris! Oui, he has been to the pack, Nepeese, and the pack turned on him. It was not a two-wolf fight—*non!* It was the pack. He is cut and torn in fifty places. And—*mon Dieu,* he is alive!"

In Pierrot's voice there was growing wonder and amazement. He was incredulous, and yet he could not disbelieve what his eyes told him. What had happened was nothing short of a miracle, and for a time he uttered not a word more but remained staring in silence while Nepeese woke from her astonishment to give Baree doctoring and food. After he had eaten ravenously of cold boiled mush, she began bathing his wounds in warm water, and after that she soothed them with bear-grease, talking to him all the time in her soft Cree. After the pain and hunger and treachery of his adventure, it was a wonderful homecoming for Baree. He slept that night at the foot of the Willow's bed. The next morning it was the cool caress of his tongue on her hand that awakened her.

WITH this day they resumed the comradeship interrupted by Baree's temporary desertion. The attachment was greater than ever on Baree's part. It was he who had run away from the Willow, who had deserted her at the call of the pack, and it seemed at times as though he sensed the depths of his perfidy and was striving to make amends. There was indubitably a very great change in him. He hung to Nepeese like a shadow. Instead of sleeping at night in the spruce shelter Pierrot made for him, he made himself a little hollow in the earth close to the cabin door. Pierrot thought that he understood, and Nepeese thought that she understood still more; but in reality the key to the mystery remained with Baree himself. He no longer played as he had played before he went off alone into the forest. He did not chase sticks, or run until he was winded, for the pure joy of running. His puppyishness was gone. In its place was a great worship and a

rankling bitterness, a love for the girl and a hatred for the pack and all that it stood for. Whenever he heard the wolf-howl, it brought an angry snarl into his throat, and he would bare his fangs until even Pierrot would draw a little away from him. But a touch of the girl's hand would quiet him.

IN a week or two the heavier snows came, and Pierrot began making his trips over the trap-line. Nepeese had entered into a thrilling bargain with him this winter. Pierrot had taken her into partnership. Every fifth trap, every fifth dead-fall and every fifth poison-bait was to be her own, and what they caught or killed was to bring a bit nearer to realization a wonderful dream that was growing in the Willow's soul. Pierrot had promised. If they had great luck that winter, they would go down together on the last snows to Nelson House and buy the little old organ that was for sale there; and if the organ was sold, they would work another winter, and get a new one.

This plan gave Nepeese an enthusiastic and tireless interest in the trap-line. With Pierrot it was more or less a fine bit of strategy. He would have sold his hand to give Nepeese the organ; he was determined that she should have it, whether the fifth traps and the fifth dead-falls and the fifth poison-baits caught the fur or not. The partnership meant nothing so far as that was concerned. But in another way it meant to Nepeese a business interest, the thrill of personal achievement. Pierrot impressed on her that it made a comrade and co-worker of her on the trail. That was his scheme: to keep her with him when he was away from the cabin. He knew that Bush McTaggart would come again to the Gray Loon, probably more than once during the winter. He had swift dogs, and it was a short journey. And when McTaggart came, Nepeese must not be at the cabin—alone.

Pierrot's trap-line swung into the north and west, covering in all a matter of fifty miles, with an average of two traps, one dead-fall and a poison-bait to each mile. It was a twisting line, blazed along streams for mink, otter and

marten, piercing the deepest forests for fisher-cat and lynx and crossing lakes and storm-swept strips of barrens where poison-baits could be set for fox and wolf. Halfway over this line Pierrot had built a small log cabin, and at the end of it another, so that a day's work meant twenty-five miles. This was easy for Pierrot, and not hard on Nepeese after the first few days.

All through October and November they made the trips regularly, making the round every six days, which gave one day of rest at the cabin on the Gray Loon and another day in the cabin at the end of the trail. To Pierrot the winter's work was business, the labor of his people for many generations back; to Nepeese and Baree it was a wild and joyous adventure that never for a day grew tiresome. Even Pierrot could not quite immunize himself against their enthusiasm. It was infectious, and he was happier than he had been since his sun had set when the princess mother died.

They were splendid months. Fur was thick, and it was steadily cold without bad storm. Nepeese not only carried a small pack on her shoulders in order that Pierrot's load might be lighter, but she trained Baree to bear tiny shoulder-panniers which she manufactured. In these panniers Baree carried the bait. In at least a third of the total number of traps set there was always what Pierrot called trash—rabbits, owls, whisky-jacks, jays and squirrels. These, with the skin or feathers stripped off, made up the bulk of the bait for the traps ahead.

ONE afternoon early in December, as they were returning to the Gray Loon, Pierrot stopped suddenly a dozen paces ahead of Nepeese and stared at the snow. A strange snowshoe trail had joined their own and was heading toward the cabin. For half a minute Pierrot was silent and scarcely moved a muscle as he stared. The trail came straight out of the north—and off there was Lac Bain. Also they were the marks of large snowshoes, and the stride indicated was that of a tall man. Before Pierrot had spoken, Nepeese had guessed what they meant.

"M'sieu the Factor from Lac Bain!" she said.

Baree was sniffing suspiciously at the strange trail. They heard the low growl in his throat, and Pierrot's shoulders stiffened.

"Yes, the M'sieu," he said.

The Willow's heart beat more swiftly as they went on. She was not afraid of McTaggart, not physically afraid; and yet something rose up in her breast and choked her at thought of his presence on the Gray Loon. Why was he there? It was not necessary for Pierrot to answer the question, even had she given voice to it. She knew. The Factor from Lac Bain had no business there—except to see her. The blood burned red in her cheeks as she thought again of that minute on the edge of the chasm when he had almost crushed her in his arms. Would he try that again?

Pierrot, deep in his own somber thoughts, scarcely heard the strange laugh that came suddenly from her lips. Nepeese was listening to the growl that was again in Baree's throat. It was a low but terrible sound. When half a mile from the cabin, she unslung the panniers from his shoulders and carried them herself. Ten minutes later they saw a man advancing to meet them.

It was not McTaggart. Pierrot recognized him, and with an audible breath of relief waved his hand. It was DeBar, who trapped in the Barren Country north of Lac Bain. Pierrot knew him well. They had exchanged fox-poison. They were friends, and there was pleasure in the grip of their hands. DeBar stared then at Nepeese.

"*Tonnerre*, she has grown into a woman!" he cried, and like a woman Nepeese looked at him straight, with the color deepening in her cheeks, as he bowed low with a courtesy that dated back a couple of centuries beyond the trap-line.

DeBar lost no time in explaining his mission, and before they reached the cabin Pierrot and Nepeese knew why he had come. M'sieu the Factor at Lac Bain was leaving on a journey in five days, and he had sent DeBar as a special messenger to request Pierrot to come up to assist the clerk and the half-breed

storekeeper in his absence. Pierrot made no comment at first. But he was thinking: Why had Bush McTaggart sent for *him*? Why had he not chosen some one nearer? Not until a fire was crackling in the sheet-iron stove in the cabin, and Nepeese was busily engaged getting supper, did he voice these questions.

DeBar shrugged his shoulders.

"He asked me, at first, if I could stay. But I have a wife with a bad lung, Pierrot. It was caught by frost last winter, and I dare not leave her long alone. He has great faith in you. Besides, you know all the trappers on the Company's books at Lac Bain. So he sent for you, and begs you not to worry about your fur-lines, as he will pay you double what you would catch in the time you are at the post."

"And — Nepeese?" said Pierrot. "M'sieu expects me to bring her?"

From the stove the Willow bent her head to listen, and her heart leaped free again at DeBar's answer.

"He said nothing about that. But surely—it will be a great change for li'le m'selle."

Pierrot nodded.

"Possibly, *Netootam*."

THEY discussed the matter no more that night. But for hours Pierrot was still, thinking, and a hundred times he asked himself that same question: why had McTaggart sent for *him*? He was not the only man well known to the trappers on the Company's books. There was Wassoon, for instance, the half-breed Scandinavian whose cabin was less than four hours' journey from the post—or Baroche, the white-bearded old Frenchman who lived yet nearer and whose word was as good as the Bible. It must be, he told himself finally, that M'sieu had sent for *him* because he wanted to win over the father of Nepeese and gain the friendship of Nepeese herself. For this was undoubtedly a very great honor that the Factor was conferring on him. And yet, deep down in his heart, he was filled with suspicion.

When DeBar was about to leave, the next morning, Pierrot said:

"Tell M'sieu that I will leave for Lac Bain the day after to-morrow."



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Fine healthy Government-inspected beef from which we make the invigorating stock; the shanks—split open to yield their nutritious marrow; large premium-grade white potatoes from Maine, the best Jersey sweet potatoes, Canadian rutabagas, plump Chantenay carrots, juicy green okra, crisp celery, snappy little white leek and other appetizing products.

"It makes me hungry just to see it all! I never would have believed it!" is the exclamation we hear almost every day from visitors to these light, airy, spotless Campbell kitchens.

When you realize the high quality and remarkable food value of these wholesome *Campbell's Soups* you will surely want to keep a supply on hand, and enjoy them often.

21 kinds

Campbell's SOUPS

LOOK FOR THE RED-AND-WHITE LABEL



After DeBar had gone, he said to Nepeese:

"And you shall remain here, *ma chérie*. I will not take you to Lac Bain. I have had a dream that M'sieu will not go on a journey, but that he has lied, and that he will be *sick* when I arrive at the post. And yet, if it should happen that you care to go—"

Nepeese straightened suddenly, like a reed that has been caught by the wind.

"*Non!*" she cried, so fiercely that Pierrot laughed, and rubbed his hands.

So it happened that on the second day after the fox-hunter's visit, Pierrot left for Lac Bain, with Nepeese in the door waving him good-by.

ON the morning of this same day Bush McTaggart rose from his bed while it was still dark. The time had come—the hour and day he had waited and schemed for so long. He had hesitated at murder—at the killing of Pierrot; and in his hesitation he had found a better way. There could be no escape for Nepeese. He would find her alone at the cabin, helpless.

McTaggart laughed. Yes, after that, Nepeese would willingly become the wife of the Factor at Lac Bain. She would not have the forest people know her as *la Bête Noir*. No! She would come willingly. And Pierrot would never know. It was a wonderful scheme, so easy, so inevitable in its outcome. And all the time Pierrot would think he was away to the east on a mission!

He ate his breakfast before dawn, and was on the trail before it was yet light. Purposely he struck due east, so that in coming up from the south and west Pierrot would not strike his sledge-tracks. For he had made up his mind now that Pierrot must never know and must never have a suspicion, even though it cost him so many more miles to travel than he would not reach the Gray Loon until the second day. It was better to be a day late, after all, as it was possible that something might have delayed Pierrot. For this reason McTaggart

made no effort to travel fast. There was no chance for disappointment. He was positive that Nepeese would not accompany her father to Lac Bain. She would be at the cabin on the Gray Loon—alone.

THIS aloneness was to Nepeese burdened with no thought of danger. There were times, now, when the thought of being alone was pleasant to her, when she wanted to dream by herself, when she visioned things into the mysteries of which she would not admit even Pierrot. She was growing into womanhood—just the sweet, closed bud of womanhood as yet—still a girl with the soft velvet of girlhood in her eyes, yet with the mystery of woman stirring gently in her soul, as if the Great Hand was hesitating between awakening her and letting her sleep a little longer. At these times, when the opportunity came to steal hours by herself, she would put on the red dress and do up her wonderful hair as she saw it in the pictures in the magazines Pierrot had sent up twice a year from Nelson House.

On the second day of Pierrot's absence Nepeese dressed herself like this, but to-day she let her hair cascade in a shining glory about her, and about her forehead bound a circlet of red ribbon. She was not yet done. To-day she had marvelous designs. On the wall close to her mirror she had tacked a large page from a woman's magazine, and on this page was a lovely vision of curls. Under it was the name MARY PICKFORD. Fifteen hundred miles north of the sunny California studio in which the picture had been taken, Nepeese, with pouted red lips and puckered forehead, was fighting to master the mystery of Little Mary's curls!

She was looking into her mirror, her face flushed and her eyes aglow in the excitement of the struggle to fashion one of the coveted ringlets from a tress that fell away below her hips, when the door opened behind her, and Bush McTaggart walked in.

What happened when McTaggart came to Nepeese in the lonely cabin on the Gray Loon is vividly described in the next installment of "A Son of Kazan"—in the August Red Book Magazine, on sale July 23rd.

Why Some Foods Explode in the Stomach

By WILLIAM ELDRIDGE

"THE combinations of food that most people eat three times a day inflict nothing less than a crime against their health and are the direct cause of 90% of all sickness."

This is the rather startling statement of Eugene Christian, the famous New York Food Scientist, whose wonderful system of corrective eating is receiving so much eager attention throughout the Nation at the present time.

According to Eugene Christian we eat without any thought of the relation which one food has to another when eaten at the same time. The result is that often we combine two foods each of great value in itself but which when combined in the stomach literally explode, liberating toxics which are absorbed by the blood and form the root of nearly all sickness, the first indications of which are acidity, fermentation, gas, constipation, and many other sympathetic ills leading to most serious consequences.

According to Christian, all of this can be avoided if we would only pay a little attention to the selection of our daily menus instead of eating without any regard for the consequences.

This does not mean that it is necessary to eat foods we don't like; instead Christian prescribes meals which are twice as delicious as those to which we are accustomed. Neither does he suggest proprietary or patented foods—he simply tells us which foods when eaten together produce health and energy by removing the cause of sickness.

Not long ago I was fortunate enough to be present when Eugene Christian was relating some of his experiences with corrective eating to a group of men interested in dietetics, and I was literally amazed at what he accomplished with food alone and without drugs or medicines of any kind.

One case which sticks in my mind was that of a mother and daughter who went to him for treatment. The mother was forty pounds overweight and her physician diagnosed her case as Bright's Disease. She had a sluggish liver, low blood pressure and lacked vitality. The daughter had an extreme case of stomach acidity and intestinal fermentation, was extremely nervous, had chronic constipation, and was 30 pounds underweight.

Christian prescribed the proper food combinations for each. Within a few weeks all symptoms had disappeared, and within three months the mother had lost 33 pounds and the daughter had gained 26 pounds, and both were in perfect health—normal in every particular.

Another case which interested me greatly was that of a young man whose efficiency had been practically wrecked through stomach acidity, fermentation and constipation resulting in physical sluggishness which was naturally reflected in his ability to use his mind. He was twenty pounds underweight when he first went to see Christian and was so nervous he couldn't sleep. Stomach and intestinal gases were so severe that they caused irregular heart action and often fits of great mental depression. As Christian describes it he was not 50% efficient either mentally or physically. Yet in a few days, by following Dr. Christian's suggestions as to food, his constipation had completely gone, although he had formerly been in the habit of taking large daily doses of a strong cathartic. In five weeks every abnormal symptom had disappeared—his weight having increased 6 pounds. In addition to this he acquired a store of physical and mental energy so great in comparison with his former self as to almost belie the fact that it was the same man.

But perhaps the most interesting case that Christian told me of was that of a multimillionaire—a man 70 years old who had been traveling with his doctor for several years in a search for health. He was extremely emaciated, had chronic constipation, lumbago and rheumatism. For over twenty years he had suffered with stomach and intestinal trouble which in reality was superaciduous secretions in the stomach. The first menus given him were designed to remove the causes of acidity, which was accomplished in about thirty days. And after this was done he seemed to undergo a complete rejuvenation. His eyesight, hearing, taste and all of his mental faculties became keener and more alert. He had had no organic trouble—but he was starving to death from malnutrition and decomposition—all caused by the wrong selection and combination of foods. After six months' treatment this man was as well and strong as he had ever been in his life.

These instances of the efficacy of right eating I have simply chosen at random from perhaps a dozen Eugene Christian told me of, every one of which was fully as interesting and they applied to as many different ailments. Surely this man Christian is doing a great work.

I know of several instances where rich men and women have been so pleased with what he has done for them that they have sent him checks for \$500 to \$1,000 in addition to the amount of the bill when paying him.

There have been so many inquiries from all parts of the United States from people seeking the benefit of Eugene Christian's advice and whose cases he is unable to handle personally that he has written a course of little lessons which tell you exactly what to eat for health, strength and effi-

ciency. This course is published by The Corrective Eating Society of New York.

These lessons—there are 24 of them—contain actual menus for breakfast, luncheon and dinner, curative as well as corrective, covering every condition of health and sickness from infancy to old age and for all occupations, climates and seasons.

Reasons are given for every recommendation based upon actual results secured in the author's many years of practice, although technical terms have been avoided. Every point is explained so clearly that there can be no possible misunderstanding.

With these lessons at hand it is just as though you were in personal contact with the great food specialist, because every possible point is so thoroughly covered that you can scarcely think of a question which isn't answered. You can start eating the very things that will produce the increased physical and mental energy you are seeking the day you receive the lessons and you will find that you secure results with the first meal.

If you would like to examine these 24 Little Lessons in Corrective Eating simply write The Corrective Eating Society, Inc., Dept. 1207, 443 Fourth Ave., New York City. It is not necessary to enclose any money with your request. Merely ask them to send the lessons on five days' trial with the understanding that you will either return them within that time or remit \$3, the small fee asked.

The reason that the Society is willing to send the lessons on free examination without money in advance is because they want to remove every obstacle to putting this knowledge in the hands of the many interested people as soon as possible, knowing full well that a test of some of the menus in the lessons themselves are more convincing than anything that can possibly be said about them.

Please clip out and mail the following form instead of writing a letter, as this is a copy of the official blank adopted by the Society and will be honored at once

CORRECTIVE EATING SOCIETY, Inc.

Dept. 1207, 443 Fourth Avenue, New York City

You may send me a prepaid copy of Corrective Eating in 24 Lessons. I will either remail them to you within five days after receipt or send you \$3.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State.....

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

THE MYSTERY OF THE HASTY ARROW

BY ANNA KATHARINE GREEN

Continued from page 474 of this issue.

To meet and make that man mine took me just two days. I don't know how I did it. I never know how I do it," he added with a sheepish smile as Mr. Gryce gave utterance to his old-fashioned "Umph!" "I don't flatter and I don't bring out my pocketbook or offer drinks or even cigars, but I get 'em, as you know, and get 'em strong, perhaps because I don't make any great effort."

"After an evening spent in the garage together, he was ready to talk, and this is what slipped out, among a lot of nonsensical gossip. Mr. X, the real Mr. X this time, has, besides his apartment in New York, a place on Long Island. The latter has been recently bought and, though fine enough, is being added to and refitted as no man at his age would take the trouble of doing, if he hadn't a woman in mind. The chauffeur—Holmes is his name—is no fool, and has seen for some time that Mr. X, for all his goings to and fro and the many calls he was in the habit of making on a certain young lady, did not expect him—that is, Holmes—to notice anything beyond the limits of his work, or to recognize in any way his employer's secret intentions. But fortunately for us, this man Holmes is just one of those singularly meddlesome people whose curiosity grows with every attempt at repression; and when, coincident with that disastrous happening at the Museum, all these loverlike attentions ceased and no calls were made and no presents sent, and gloom instead of cheer marked his employer's manner, he made up his mind to sacrifice a portion of his dignity rather than endure the fret of a mystery he did not understand. This meant not only keeping his eyes open,—this he had always done,—but his ears as well.

"The young lady, whose name he never mentioned, lives not in the city but in that same Long Island village where Mr. X's country-house is in the process

of renovation. If he, Holmes, should ever be so fortunate as to be ordered to drive there again, he knew of a gravel walk running under the balcony where the two often sat. He would make the acquaintance of that gravel walk instead of sitting out the hour somewhere in the rear, as he had hitherto been accustomed to do. What's the use of having ears if you don't use them? Nobody would be any the worse, and his mind would be at rest.

"And do you know, sir, that he did actually carry that cowardly resolution through? There came a night—I think it was Tuesday—when the order came, and they took the road to Belport. Not a word did his employer utter the whole way. Solemn and still he sat, and when they arrived he descended without a word, rang the bell and entered the house. It was very warm, that night, Holmes said, and before long he heard the glass doors open onto the balcony, and knew that his wished-for chance had come. Leaving the limousine, he crept around to secure a place among the bushes, and what he heard while there seemed to compensate him for what he called his loss of dignity. The young girl was crying, and the man was talking to her kindly enough but in a way to end whatever hopes she may have had.

"Holmes heard him say: 'It cannot be, now. Circumstances have changed for me lately, and much as I regret it I must ask you to be so good as to forgive me for giving up our plans.' Then he offered her money,—an annuity, I believe they call it,—but she cried out at that, saying it was love she wanted, to be petted and cared for—money she could do without. When he showed himself again in front, he was stiffer and more solemn than ever, and said 'Home,' in a sad and dreary way which made the chauffeur feel decidedly uncomfortable.

"Of course Holmes is quite blind to

what this all means, but you may possibly see some connection between this sudden act of sacrifice on X's part and the work of the arrow. At all events, I thought you ought to know that Mr. X's closet holds a skeleton which he will doubtless take every pains to keep securely locked from general view. Holmes says that his last word to the disappointed girl was in the way of warning. No mention of this break in their plans was to be made without his sanction."

"Good work, Sweetwater! You have strengthened my hands wonderfully. Does this fellow Holmes know you for a police-detective?"

"Indeed not, sir. That would be fatal to our friendship, I am sure. I haven't even let him discover that what he was burning to tell had any especial interest for me. I let him ramble on with just a word here and there to show I wasn't bored. He hasn't an idea—"

"Very good. Now, what do you propose to do next?"

"To take up my residence in Belport."

"Why Belport?"

"Because X proposes to move there, bag and baggage, this very week."

"Before his house is done?"

"Yes. He hates the city. Wants to have an eye to the changes being made. Perhaps he thinks a little work of this kind may distract him."

"And you?"

"Was a master carpenter once, you know."

"I see."

"And have a friend on the spot who promises to recommend me."

"Are workmen wanted there?"

"A good one, very much."

"I'm sure you'll fill the bill."

"I shall try to, sir."

"But for the risk you run of being recognized, I should bet on you, Sweetwater."

"I know; people will not forget the unfortunate shape of my nose."

"You were up and down the Museum for hours. He must know your face like a book."

"It can't be helped. I shall keep out of sight as much as possible whenever he is around. I am an expert workman

in the line wanted. I understand my trade, and he will see that I do and doubt his eyes rather than stretch probabilities to the point of connecting me in any way with the force. Besides, my expression changes when my hands get in touch with the wood; and I can look a man in the eye, if I have to, without a quiver of self-consciousness. His will drop before mine will."

"Your name as carpenter?"

"Jacob Shott. It's the name by which Holmes already knows me."

"Well, well, the game may be worth the candle. You can soon tell. I will keep you posted."

The rest was business with which we need not concern ourselves.

CHAPTER XV

A SHADED walk with a glimpse of sea beyond, embowering trees, a stretch of lawn on one side, and on the other the dormer windows of a fine old house half hidden by scaffolding, from which there came now and then the quick strokes of a workman's hammer.

The hour was half-past four, if the sharp little note of a cuckoo-clock, snapping out the hour, told the time correctly.

Two men are pacing this leafy retreat, both of whom we have seen before, but under circumstances so distracting that we took little note of their appearance, fine as it undoubtedly was in either case. However, we are at more leisure now, and will pause for an instant to give you some idea of these two prominent men, with one of whom our story will henceforth have very much to do.

One of them—the Curator of our famous Museum—lacks comeliness of figure, though at moments he can be very impressive. We can therefore recognize him at a distance by means of a certain ungainliness of stride sometimes seen in a man wholly given over to intellectual pursuits. But when he turns and you get a glimpse of his face, you experience at once the scope of mind and charm of spirit which make his countenance a marked one in the metropolis. A little gray about the temples, a tendency—growing upon him, alas!—to raise



Do hurry and finish, so I can try it too!

Have you tried "the most famous skin treatment ever formulated"?

If not, you, like this girl, should begin tonight to get the benefit of this famous skin treatment, which will bring to your skin the delicate color, the lovelier freshness and clearness you have always wanted.

Is there some condition of your skin that is keeping it from being the attractive one you want it to be?

Whatever it is—it *can* be corrected.

Every day as old skin dies, new skin forms in its place. By the proper external treatment you can make the new skin just what you would love to have it.

Begin this famous skin treatment tonight

Once a day, just before retiring, dip a washcloth in warm water and hold it to your face until the skin is softened. Then lather your cloth well with Woodbury's Facial Soap and warm water. Apply it to your face and distribute the lather thoroughly.

Now, with the tips of your fingers, work this cleansing, antiseptic lather into your skin, always with an upward and outward motion—the colder the better. Finish by rubbing your face for a few minutes with a piece of ice. Be particular

to rinse the skin thoroughly and dry it carefully.

The first time you use this treatment you will begin to realize the change it is going to make in your skin. This treatment keeps your skin so active that the new delicate skin which forms every day cannot help taking on that greater loveliness for which you have longed.

A 25c cake is sufficient for a month or six weeks of this famous skin treatment.

Get a cake today.

Send now for booklet of famous skin treatment

Send 4c and we will send you a booklet giving all of the Woodbury treatments, together with a cake of Woodbury's Facial Soap large enough for a week of any Woodbury treatment. Send to-day. Address The Andrew Jergens Co., 1714 Spring Grove Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

If you live in Canada, address The Andrew Jergens Co., Ltd., 1714 Sherbrooke St., Perth, Ontario.



Woodbury's Facial Soap

For sale wherever toilet goods are sold.

his hand to his ear when called upon to listen, show that he has already passed the meridian of life; but in his quick glance, and clear and rapid speech, youth still lingers, making of him a companion delightful to many and admirable to all.

The other—Marshall Roberts, his bosom friend, and the Museum's chief director—is of a different type, but no less striking to the eye. For him, personality has done much toward raising him to his present status among the leading men of New York. While not tall, he is tall enough never to look short, owing to the trim elegance of his figure and the quiet dignity of his carriage. He does not need to turn his face to impress you with the idea that he is handsome; but when he does so, you find that your expectations are more than met by the reality. For though he may not have the strictly regular features we naturally associate with one of his poise and matchless outline, there is enough of that quality, and more than enough of that additional elusive something which is an attraction in itself, to make for handsomeness in a marked degree. He, like his friend, has passed his fortieth year, but nowhere save in his abundant locks can one see any sign of approaching age. They are white—so white they seem an anomaly, and what is more, a surprising one to his companion, who steals a look at them now and then as he chats on in what has become almost a monologue, so little does Roberts join in the conversation.

FINALLY the Curator paused, and stealing another look at that white head, remarked anxiously:

"Have you not grown gray very suddenly? I don't remember your being whiter than myself the day I dined with you just preceding the horrible occurrence at the Museum."

"I have been growing gray for a year," rejoined the other. "My father was white at forty; I am just forty-three."

"It becomes you, and yet—Roberts, you have taken this matter too much to heart. We were not to blame in any way, unless it was in having such deadly weapons within reach. How could one suppose—"

"Yes, how could one suppose!" echoed Mr. Roberts. "And the mystery of it! The police seem no nearer solving the problem now than on the night they practiced archery in the galleries. It does wear on me, possibly because I live so much alone. I see—"

Here he stopped abruptly. They resumed their stroll, this time away from the house and toward the oval cut in the trees for a straight view out to the sea.

"See what?" urged the Curator with an accent one might almost call tender—would have been called tender, if used in addressing a woman.

"See *her*, that dead girl!—constantly—at night when my eyes are shut—in the daytime while I go about my affairs, here, there and everywhere. The young, young face! so white, so still, so strangely and so unaccountably familiar! Do you feel the same? Did she remind you of anyone we know? I grow old trying to place her. I can say this to you; but not to another soul could I speak of what has become to me a sort of blind obsession. She was a stranger. I know of no Madame Duclos and am sure that I never saw her young daughter before; and yet I have started up in my bed more than once during these past few nights, confident that in another moment memory would supply the clue which will rid my mind of the eternal question as to where I have seen a face like hers before. But memory fails to answer; and the struggle, momentarily interrupted, begins again, to the destruction of my peace and comfort."

"Odd! But you must rid yourself of what unnerves you so completely. It does no good and only adds to regrets which are poignant enough in themselves."

"That is true; but—stop a minute. I see it now—her face, I mean. It comes between me and the house there. Even your presence does not dispel it. It is—no, it's gone again."

"You live too lonely a life," said the Curator. "You should seek change—recreation—possibly something more absorbing than either."

"You mean marriage?"

"Yes, Roberts, I do. Pardon me; I want to see your eye beam again with

Continued on fourth following page.



I can enjoy myself
again since I cleared
my skin with

Resinol Soap

"When my complexion was red, rough and unsightly, I was so *ashamed* that I never had any fun. I imagined that people avoided me—perhaps they *did*! But the regular use of Resinol Soap—with a little Resinol Ointment just at first—has given me back my clear, healthy skin. I *wish* you'd try it!"

The soothing, restoring influence that makes this possible is the *Resinol* which Resinol Soap contains and which physicians prescribe so extensively, in Resinol Ointment, for the treatment of skin affections.

Resinol Soap contains no harsh, drying alkali, and is not artificially colored, its rich brown being entirely due to its Resinol medication.

Sold by all druggists. For sample cake, free, with miniature box of Resinol Ointment, write to Dept. 31-C, Resinol, Baltimore.

Resinol Soap is excellent for the hair, in the bath, and for a baby's tender skin.

An Apology Demanded—!

Would
You Have
Made It?



The idea for this advertisement was suggested to us by a prominent Fire-Chief, who was consulted as to the truth of assertions made in the "brutal truth" letter.

THE GENERAL MACHINERY CO.
WASHINGTON, MASS.
TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS, SMITH BROS. BLDG.
(Name and address fictitious)

February 11, 1917.

To Our Friends and Customers:

We regret to inform you that yesterday our plant suffered from disastrous fire. Our loss is fully covered by insurance, and business will be resumed with as little delay as possible.

Meanwhile, for two or three months, pending rebuilding, etc., we are obliged to ask the kind indulgence of our customers in the matter of deliveries and the fulfillment of contracts. We solicit, also, the co-operation of our friends in restoring our records, part of which have been destroyed by the conflagration.

We ask our friends to stand by us in the day of our misfortune, and we assure them that we will put forth the most strenuous effort night and day to resume our manufacturing facilities.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) T. KENDRICK, President.

P. S.: Edwards Manufacturing Co.—Above explains itself. Two loaded cars intended for you were destroyed on the siding. Also about three carloads of goods in process. Will give you first attention when we get going again.—Tough luck, wasn't it?

EDWARDS MANUFACTURING CO.
EDWARDSVILLE, N. Y.
(Name and address fictitious)

February 12, 1917.

The General Machinery Co.,
Temporary Headquarters,
Smith Brothers' Building,
Washington, Mass.

Gentlemen:

We received your letter of the 11th inst., with the story that your plant had been destroyed by fire, and that it will be months before we can expect delivery from you.

You seem to think it is just a case of "tough luck" on your part, and that we should take it good-naturedly.

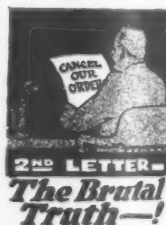
But we don't see it that way.

Failure to get supplies from you will put our farm dairy-equipment business out of joint for weeks, while we are getting supplies elsewhere.

We took it for granted you had an up-to-date plant where a thing of this kind would be impossible. It certainly would be impossible in our plant, as in most of the other plants we deal with. For our plant and every other up-to-date plant we ever heard of is protected against the danger of a general fire by an automatic sprinkler system.

[Was this sweeping assertion justified? Read the Fire-Chief's conclusions, next page.]

To speak the brutal truth, this fire seems to us to betray sheer neglect of an elementary precaution on your part.



We have been satisfied in all other respects with your handling of our interests, and later we shall be glad to do business with you—providing you have properly safeguarded your business and your customers against another interruption by fire.

In the meantime, we shall be obliged to have our orders filled elsewhere. Please accept this, therefore, as a cancellation of all orders, including those for June delivery.

Very truly yours,

T. O. EDWARDS, *President*

MERRIC MACHINERY CO
AIMESSBURY, OHIO
(Name and address fictitious)

February 12, 1916

Edwards Manufacturing Company,
Edwardsville, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

The newspapers report the destruction by fire of the plant of the General Manufacturing Company, and I assume, therefore, that you are in the market for quick deliveries of certain materials which I think we are prepared to furnish. I have telegraphed our New York agent, Mr. Miller, to see you at once, and you may expect him on the same day you receive this letter. We trust you will favor us with a three-year or five-year contract under specifications we recently bid on. We have recently installed screens and special dies for this class of work and could be virtually a branch of your own business. Furthermore—

We have automatic-sprinkler protection and any interruption by fire is practically impossible.

Very truly yours,

E. D. JACKSON, *President*.

Should Edwards Apologize?

Sometimes the coolest-headed man "blows up" when he sees his plans upset and his promises broken through no fault of his own. But Mr. Edwards was within the truth and he doesn't need to apologize. The Fire-Chief who was consulted proved that in the farm-machinery industry practically all of the large plants are protected by automatic sprinklers. Many other industries are equally protected—woodworking, leather-working, textile, paper, etc.

The function of automatic-sprinkler protection is to keep your *going* business going! Ordinary insurance does not cover the havoc and demoralization and loss involved in the mere suspension of business. No well-run business can afford to take the chance.

Sprinklers reduce the insurance rate 40 per cent. to 90 per cent. or more. As reducers of rates and hazards they rank ahead of fire-proof construction.

Through companies that specialize in such matters you can arrange to let the Grinnell System be paid for in annual instalments out of its own savings, if desired.

There are several kinds of sprinklers which pass the requirements of the underwriters. The Grinnell is the standard and the best. It protects more property than all other kinds put together. We build your whole system to measure in our shops, leaving a minimum of work to do on your premises, and we take responsibility for the entire system.

We can tell you quickly how profitable a sprinkler system will be for you if you will give us certain data. May we send you the set of questions known as the Grinnell Exemption Blank? When we see the answer we can give you a general idea of what sprinklers would do for you, and how much money per year they would save you.

Address the General Fire Extinguisher Company, 273 West Exchange Street, Providence, R. I.



GRINNELL
AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM
The Factory-Assemblea System



In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

THE MYSTERY OF THE HASTY ARROW

contentment. The loss of your late companion has left you desolate, more desolate than you have been willing to acknowledge. You cannot replace her—"

"I am wedded to politics."

"An untrustworthy jade. When did politics ever make a man happy?"

"Happy!" They were turned toward the house again. When near, Roberts capped his exclamation with the remark:

"You ask a great deal for me, more than you ask for yourself. You have not married again."

"But my mistress is not a jade. I find joy in my work. I have not had time to woo a woman as she should be wooed if she's to be a happy second wife. I should have so much to explain to her. When I get looking over prints, the dinner-bell might ring a dozen times without my hearing it. A letter from an agent telling of some wonderful find in Mesopotamia would make me forget whether my wife's hair were brown or black. I don't need diversion, Roberts."

"Yet you enjoy a couple of hours in the country, a whiff of fresh air—"

"And a chat with a friend. Yes, I do; but if the Museum were open—"

Mr. Roberts smiled.

"I see that you are incorrigible." Then, with a gesture toward the house: "Come and see my new veranda. It will have an outlook surpassing the one we've just seen."

As you have already surmised, he was the owner of this place, and the man for whose better understanding Sweetwater had again taken up the plane and the hammer.

CHAPTER XVI

AS they made their way through scattered timber and the litter of fresh carpentry-work, the man who was working there and who had certainly outstayed his time, took up his kit and disappeared around the corner of the house. Neither noted him. The cuckoo-clock was chirping out its five small notes from the cheerful interior, and the Curator was remarking upon it.

"That's a merry sound, both sweet and stimulating; and better than that,

I can hear it without effort. I believe I should like to have a clock of that kind."

"It goes where I go," muttered its strange owner with what seemed an involuntary emphasis. Then as the Curator turned upon him in some surprise, he added with studied indifference: "I brought it from Switzerland when I was younger than I am now—a silly memento, but I fancy it."

A commonplace explanation surely; why, then, did that same workman, who had stopped short after rounding the corner to pick up something which he as quickly threw down, turn a quick head and listen eagerly for what might be said next. Nothing came of it, for the veranda door was near and the two gentlemen had stepped in; but to one who knew Sweetwater, the smile with which he resumed his work had an element in it which, if seen, would have darkened still further the gloom in the troubled eye of the speaker.

Switzerland! He had said Switzerland.

It was not long after this that the Curator and his host left for New York.

THE house was not ready for occupancy, but was in the process of being made so by the woman who had done duty as housekeeper for Mr. Roberts both before his marriage and since his wife's death. During the fifteen years which had intervened, she had been simply the cook.

This woman, Huldah Weston by name, did not accompany them. She was in Belport to stay, and as it behooves us to remain there for a while longer ourselves, we will join her in the quiet rest she is taking on the kitchen-steps before shutting up the house for the night.

She is not alone. A young man is with her—one to whom she is giving temporary board and lodging in exchange for the protection of his presence and such slight help as he can afford her in the heavy task of distributing and arranging the furniture.

We know this man. It is the one we have just seen halting at the corner of the house, on quitting his work on the new veranda—Sweetwater.

"Oh, it's just your nerves!"

MOTHERLIKE, clinging to the hope that "a good night's rest will right matters." But truthfully, isn't it more than a mere passing nerve irritation—are not the nerves really *starving*? Nature is signalling for help. And unless help comes...!

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He is a genial soul; she, though very old for the responsibilities she still insists upon carrying, enjoys a good laugh. Nor is she averse to the numberless little kindly attentions with which he shows his respect for her age if not a personal liking for herself. In short, they are almost friends, and she trusts him as she has never trusted any young man yet, save the boy she lost when she was still a comely widow.

Perhaps this is why, on this night when we find the two together, he ventures to turn the talk upon the man she has so devotedly served during the better part of her life.

HE began with the cuckoo-clock. Where did it come from? How long had they had it? What a jolly little customer the wee bird was, darting out and darting in with his hurry-call to anyone who would listen! It made a fellow feel ashamed to dawdle at his work. It wouldn't do to let any mere bird get ahead of him—a wooden bird at that!

He got her talking. She had known Mr. Roberts' mother, and she had been in the house (a young girl then) when he went away to Europe. He had not wanted to go. He was in love, or thought he was, with a woman older than himself. But the mother did not approve of the match, though the lady had a mint of money and everything in her favor but those seven years. She afterward became his wife, and they lived very happily together till a year ago, when she died. He has felt her loss deeply. Anyone who looked at him could see that.

"She was a good woman, then?"

"Very good."

"Well, life must be lonesome for a widower, especially if he has no children. But perhaps he has some married, or at school?"

"No, he has no children, and no relations, to speak of."

"And he brought that clock from Switzerland? Did he ever say from what part of Switzerland?"

"If he did, I wouldn't remember; I've no memory for foreign names."

This sent Sweetwater off on another tack. He knew such a good story, which, having told, he seemed to have forgotten all about the clock, for he said

nothing more about it, and not much more about Mr. Roberts.

But when, a little later, he followed her into that gentleman's room for the purpose of unlocking a trunk which had been delivered that day, he took advantage of her momentary absence in search of the key, to pull out that cuckoo-clock from the wall where it hung and read the small slip of paper pasted across its back. As he hoped, it gave the name of the town where it had been manufactured, and that of the firm from which it had been bought.

But that was not all. Underneath, and running well across the label, he saw some faded lines in fine handwriting, which proved to be a couplet signed with four initials. The latter were not quite legible, but the couplet he could read without the least difficulty. It was highly sentimental, and might mean much and might mean nothing. If the handwriting should prove to be Mr. Roberts', the probabilities were in favor of the former supposition—or so he said to himself, as he swung the clock back into place.

WHEN Mrs. Weston returned, he was standing as patiently as possible in the middle of the room, saying over and over to himself to insure remembrance till he could jot the same down in his notebook: "*Lucerne. . . . I love but thee—and thee will I love to eternity.*"

However, his interest in this slight and doubtful clue sank into insignificance when, having unlocked and unstrapped the trunk which Mrs. Weston pointed out, he saw to his infinite satisfaction that it held Mr. Roberts' clothing—the one thing in the world toward which at this exact moment his curiosity mainly pointed. If only he might help her handle the heavy coats which lay so temptingly on top! Should he propose to do so? Looking at her firm chin and steady eye, he felt that he did not dare. To rouse the faintest suspicion in this woman's intelligent mind would be fatal to all further procedure, and so he stood indifferent, while she lifted garment after garment and laid them carefully on the bed. He counted five coats and as many vests—and was racking his



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THE COCA-COLA CO. Atlanta, Ga.



brains for some plausible excuse for a nearer inspection, when she stopped in the midst of her work, remarking:

"That will do for to-night. To-morrow I will look them all over for moths before hanging them away in the closet."

And he had to go, leaving them lying there within reach of his hand, when one glance at the lining of a certain coat which had especially attracted his eye might have given him the one clue he most needed.

The room which had been allotted to him in this house was in the rear and at the top of a steep flight of stairs. As he sought it that night, he cast a quick glance through the narrow passageway opening just beyond his own door. Would it be possible for him to thread those devious ways and reach Mr. Roberts' room without rousing Mrs. Weston, who in spite of her years had the alertness of a watchdog with eye and ear ever open? To be found strolling through quarters where he had no business would be worse than being suspected of taking a personal interest in the owner's garments. He was of an adventurous turn, and ever ready to risk something on the turn of a die, but not too much. A false move might hazard all; besides, he remembered the airing these clothes were to get and the nearness of the clothes-yard to the pump he so frequently patronized, and all the chances which this gave for an inspection which would carry little danger to one of his ready wit.

So he gave up the midnight search he might have attempted under some circumstances, and shut his room from the moon and his eyes to sleep, and dreamed. Was it of the great Museum, with its hidden mystery enshrouding its many wonders of high art? Or perhaps it was of a far-off time and scene, where in the stress of great emotion the trembling hand of Marshall Roberts had written on the back of this foolish clock the couplet which Sweetwater had so faithfully memorized:

I love but thee. And thee
Will I love to eternity.

AT eight o'clock next morning the quick strokes of the workman's hammer reawakened the echoes once more

at the end of the building where the big inclosed veranda was going up.

At nine o'clock, under a cloudless sky, Mrs. Weston could be seen hanging up her master's coats and trousers on a long line stretched across the clothes-yard. They remained there two hours, viewed from afar by Sweetwater, but not approached till he saw the old woman disappear from one of the gates with a basket on her arm. Then he developed thirst and went rearward to the pump. While there, he took a look out to the sea. A brisk wind was springing up. It gave him an idea.

Making sure that his fellow-workmen were all busy, he loosened one end of the line holding the fluttering garments—and then he went back to his work. As the wind increased, the strain on the line became too great, and soon he had the satisfaction of seeing the whole thing fall in one wild flap to the ground. With an exclamation calculated to draw the attention of the men about him to what had happened, he rushed to the rescue, lifted the line and rearranged the clothes. Then refastening—this time securely—the end of the line which had slipped loose, he returned to his post, with just one quick and disappointed look thrown back at the now safe if wildly fluttering garments.

He had improved his opportunity to examine the inside of every coat and had found nothing to reward his scrutiny. But it was not this which had given him his chief annoyance. It was the fact that the one coat from which he had expected the anticipated clue—the coat which Mr. Roberts had certainly worn on that tragic day at the Museum—was not there. A summer overcoat had filled out the number, and his investigation was incomplete.

Why was that one coat lacking? He was sure he had seen it the night before, lying on the bed with the others. Was it still there, or had it been stowed away in drawer or closet, irrespective of its danger from moths, for a reason he would give his eyeteeth to know but dared not ask for till he had clinched his friendship with this old woman so thoroughly that he could ask her anything—which certainly was not the case as yet.

The absence of the one coat he wanted most to see afflicted him sorely. He told Mrs. Weston, on her return, how the line had fallen and how he had replaced it, but for all his wits he could not get any further. With the close of the day's work and the reappearance of Mr. Roberts, he slipped away to the village, to avoid an encounter of the results of which he felt very doubtful. His dinner would not be ready till after Mr. Roberts had been served, and the three hours which must necessarily elapse before that happy moment looked very long and very unproductive to him, especially as he had found no answer as yet to the question which so grievously perplexed him.

HE had paced the main street twice and had turned into a narrow lane ending in the smallest of gardens and the most infinitesimal of houses, when the door of this same house opened and a man came out whose appearance held him speechless for a moment—then sent him forward with a quickly beating heart. It was not the man himself who produced this somewhat startling effect; it was his clothes. So far as his hat and nether garments went, they were, if not tattered, not very far from it; but the coat he wore was not only trim but made of the finest cloth and without the smallest sign of wear. It was so conspicuously fine, and looked so grotesquely out of place on the man wearing it, that he could pass no one without rousing curiosity, and he probably had all he wanted to do for the next few days in explaining how a fine gentleman's coat had fallen to his lot.

But to Sweetwater its interest lay in something more important than the amusing incongruity it offered to the eye. It looked exactly like the one belonging to Mr. Roberts which had escaped his scrutiny in so remarkable a way. Should it prove to be that same, how fortunate he was to have it brought thus easily within his reach and under circumstances so natural it was not necessary

for him to think twice how best to take advantage of them!

Father Dobbins—for that is the name by which this old codger was known to the boys—was, as might be expected, very proud of his new acquisition and quite blind to the contrast it offered to his fringed-out trouser-legs. He had a smile on his face which broadened as he caught Sweetwater's sympathetic glance.

"Fine day," he mumbled. "Are ye wantin' somethin' of me that ye're comin' this way?"

"Perhaps and perhaps," answered Sweetwater, "—if that fine coat I see you wearing is the one given you by Mrs. Weston up the road."

"Deed, sir, and what's amiss? She gave it to me, yes. Came all the way into the village to find me and give it to me. Too small for her master, she said; and would I take it to oblige him. Does she want it back?"

"Oh, no—not she. She's not that kind. It's only that she has since remembered that there's a rip in one of the pockets—an inside one, I believe. She's afraid it might lose you a dime some day. Will you let me see if she is right? If so, I was to take you to the tailor's and have it fixed immediately. I'm to pay for it."

The old man stared in slow comprehension; then he slowly put his basket down.

"I warrant ye it's all right," he said. "But look, an ye will. I don't want to lose no dimes."

Sweetwater threw back one side of the coat, then the other, felt in the pockets and smiled. But Gryce, and not ignorant Father Dobbins, should have seen that smile. There was comedy in it, and there was the deepest tragedy also; for the marks of stitches forcibly cut were to be seen under one of the pockets—stitches which must have held something as narrow as an umbrella-band and no longer than the little strip at which Mr. Gryce had been looking one night in a melancholy little short of prophetic.

Has Sweetwater found the trail to an explanation of "The Mystery of the Hasty Arrow" by discovering this clue in Director Roberts' cast-off coat? Look out for surprises in the next installment—in the August Red Book Magazine, on sale July 23rd.



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In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

Continued from page 514 of this issue.

Some Americans asserted that it was none of America's business what happened in Europe or how many American citizens died on the free seas, and that the one way to bring war into our country was to be prepared for it. Other Americans grew angry enough to forswear their allegiance to a nation of poltroons and dotards; they went to France or Canada to fight or fly for the Allies. Many of them died. Yet others tried to equip themselves at home somewhat to meet the red flood when it should break the dam and sweep across the American borders.

Of these last was Jim Dyckman. Unhappily married men have always fled to the barracks or the deck, as ill-mated women fled to convents and charities.

KEDZIE had pouted awhile at Jim's patriotism, ridiculed it and hated it, and then accepted it as a matter of course. The rehearsals of "The Day of the Bud" gave her some business, and she picked up a few new friends. She made her appearance with the company in a three-nights' performance that netted several thousands of dollars. Jim saw her once. She was gorgeous, a little too gorgeous. She did not belong. She felt it herself, and overworked her carelessness. Her nonsuccess hurt her bitterly. People did not say of her as in the movies, "How sweet!" but "Rather common!"

And now Kedzie was bewildered and lost. She found no comfort in Jim. She had to seek companionship somewhere. At first she made her engagements only on Jim's drill-nights. Soon she made them on nights when he was free.

In June, Jim went to the officer's school of application at Peekskill for a week in order to get a smattering of tuition under regular army instructors. He slept on a cot in a tent and studied map-making and military bookkeeping and mimic warfare and was tremendously happy.

Kedzie made a bad week of it. She missed him sadly. There was no one to quarrel with or make up with. When he came back late Saturday night, she was so glad to see him that she cried blissfully upon his proud bosom.

They had a little imitation honeymoon and went motoring on Sunday out into the lands where June was embroidering the grass with flowers and shaking the petals off the branches where young fruit was fashioning.

They discussed their summer schemes, and she dreaded the knowledge that in July he must go to the maneuvers for three weeks. They agreed to get aboard his yacht for a little cruise before that dreadful interlude.

And then early the next morning, the morning of the 19th of June, the knuckles of his valet on the door woke Jim from his slumber, and a voice through the panels murmured:

"Very sorry, sir, but you are wanted on the telephone, sir. It's your regiment."

That was the way the Paul Reverses of 1916 summoned the troops to arms.

Mr. Minute Man Dyckman sat on the edge of his bed in his silk pajamas with the telephone receiver at his ear and yawned. "H'lo! Who's it—what is it? Oh, it's you, Sergeant! Yes? No! For God's sake! I'll get out right away."

"What's the matter? Is the house on fire?" Kedzie gasped from her pillow, half awake and only half afraid, so prettily befuddled she was with sleep. She would have made a picture if Jim had had eyes to see her as she struggled to one elbow and thrust with her other hand her curls back into her nightcap all askew. Her gown was sliding over one shoulder down to her elbow and up to one outthrust knee.

Jim put away the telephone and pondered. Kedzie caught at his arm.

"What's the matter? Why don't you tell me!"

He spoke with a boyish pride of war and a husbandly solemnity:

"The President has called out the National Guard. We're to mobilize to-day and get to the Border as soon as we can. They hope that our regiment will be the first to move."

CHAPTER LXIV

KEDZIE'S answer was a fierce seizure of him in her arms. She was palsied with fright for him. She had seen more pictures of dead soldiers than he knew, and now she saw her man shattered and tortured with wounds and thirst. She felt in one swift shock what the wives of Europe had felt by the million. She clung to Jim and sobbed:

"You sha'n't go. I won't let them take you! You belong to me!"

He gathered her awkwardly into his arms, and they were more nearly married then than they had ever been or should ever be again.

The pity of it! that only their separation could bring them together! Fate is the original Irish bullster.

Jim tried hurriedly to console Kedzie. He found her hard to make brave. The early morningness of the shock, the panic of scattered sleep, gave her added terror. He had to be cruel at last. Without intention of humor, he said:

"Really, honey, you know you just can't keep the President waiting."

He tore loose the tendrils of her fingers and ran to his own dressing-room. She wept awhile; then she rose to help accouter him. He had his uniform at home still.

In the Grecian simplicity of her nightgown, the very cream of silk, she might have been Andromache harnessing Hector. Only there was no baby for him to leave with her, no baby to shrink in fright from the horsehair crest of the helmet that he did not wear.

When he was all dressed in his olive-drab, she still could not let him go. She held him with her soft arms and twiddled the gun-metal buttons of his blouse. And when at length she must make an end of farewells, she hugged him with all her might and was glad that the hard buttons hurt the delicate

breast that he felt against him smotheringly sweet and perilously yielding.

ON the third day there was a ruffle of drums and a crying of brass on Fifth Avenue. People recalled the great days when the boys in blue had paraded away to the war. Only this regiment marched up, not down the Avenue. It was the Sixty-ninth, its flagstaff solid with the silver rings of battle. It was moving north to the mobilization camp.

On the ninth day the Seventh went down the Avenue, twelve hundred strong, to entrain for Texas. The bullets of the foe were not the only dangers. It was midsummer, and these men were bound for the tropics and the cursed fields of sand where the tarantula, the rattlesnake and the scorpion lurked under the cactus.

Jim's mother thought less of the Mexicans than of the fact that there were no sleeping-cars even for the officers. They would get them on the way, but it would be a fearsome journey ever southward into the heat, six days in the troop-trains.

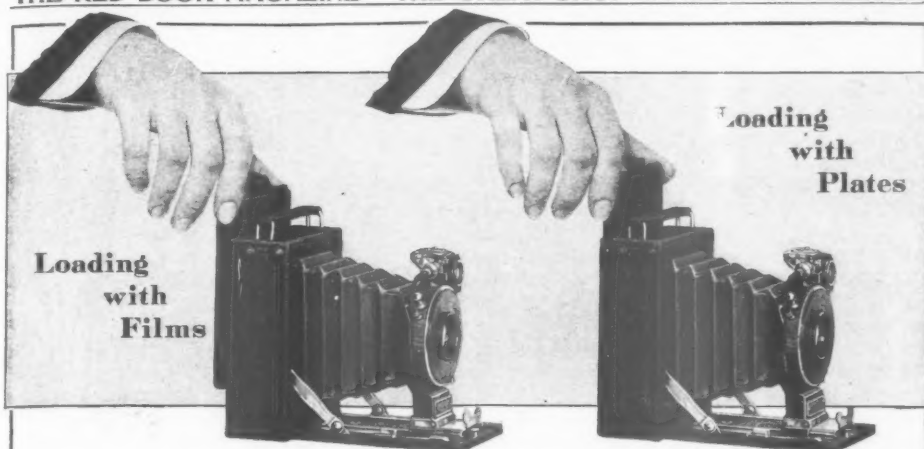
Kedzie was proud of her husband, quite conceited about him, glad that he was marching instead of standing on the curb. But her heart, doubled in bulk, pounded against her side like the leaden clapper of a broken bell.

Jim caught sight of her where she stood on the steps of his father's house; and her eyes, bright with tears, saddened him. The fond gaze of his mother touched another wellspring of emotion, and his father's big, proud stare another.

But when by chance among the mosaic of faces he saw Charity Coe, there was a sorrow in her look that made him stumble; and his heart lost step with the rhythm. Somehow it seemed cruellest of all to leave her thus.

THE town was monstrously lonely when Kedzie turned back to her widowhood. Jim's mother and father and sister were touched by her grief and begged her to make their home hers, but she shook her head.

For a while her grief and her pride sustained her. She was the Spartan wife of the brave soldier. She even took up knitting. She thought in socks.



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But the hateful hours kept coming; the nights would not be brief, and the days would not curtail their length nor quicken their pace. The loathsome, inevitable result arrived.

Even her grief began to bore her. Fidelity grew inane, and her young heart shrieked aloud for diversion.

If battles had happened down there, if something stirring had only appeared in the news, she could have taken some refreshment of excitement from the situation. Heroic demands breed heroes and heroines, but all that this crisis demanded was the fidelity of torpor, the loyalty of a mollusk.

The officers began to resign by the score, by the hundred. As many enlisted men dropped out as could beg off. Jim could afford to stay; he would not resign, though Kedzie wrote appeals and finally demands that he return to his wretched wife.

Resentment replaced sorrow in her heart. She began to impute ugly motives to his absence. The tradition of the alluring Mexican señorita obsessed her. She imagined him engaged in wild romances with sullen beauties. She was worried about guitar-music and stiletos.

If there were beautiful señoritas there in MacAllen, Jim did not see them. His dissipations were visits to the movie shows. Liquor was forbidden to officers and men, and conviviality was restricted to the soda-water fountains. He became as rabid a consumer of ice-cream cones and sundaes as a *matinée* girl. It was a burlesque of war to make the angels hold their sides, if the angels could forget the slaughter-house of Europe.

Jim felt that the Government had buncoed him into this comic-opera chorus. He resented the service as an incarceration. But he would not resign. For months he plodded the doleful round of his duties, ate bad food, poured out unbelievable quantities of sweat and easily believable quantities of profanity.

IT was easier, however, for Jim to get along thus there where everybody did the same, than it was for Kedzie to get along ascetically in New York when nearly everybody she knew was gay.

She might have gone down to Texas

to see Jim, but when he wrote her how meager the accommodations were and how harsh the comforts, she pained him by taking his advice. Like almost all the other wives, she stayed at home and made the best of it.

The first diversion Kedzie sought was really an effort of her grief to renew itself by a little repose. Her first amusement was for her grief's sake. But before long her diversions were undertaken for diversion's sake.

She had to have friends, and she had to take what she could get. The more earnest elements of society did not interest her, nor she them. The fast crowd disgusted her at first, but it remained the only one that did not repulse her advances.

Those who were careless of their own behavior were careless of their accomplices. They accepted Kedzie without scruple. They accepted especially the invitations she could well afford. She ceased to be afraid of a compliment. She grew addicted to flattery. She learned to take a joke off-color and match it in shade.

She met women of malodorous reputation and found that they were not so black as they had been painted. She learned how warm-hearted and charitable a woman could be for whom the world had a cold shoulder and no tolerance.

And thus by easy stages and generous concessions Kedzie, who had begun her second marriage with the strictest ideals of behavior, found herself surrounded by people of a loose-reined life. Things once abhorred became familiar, amusing, charming.

Kedzie even forgave Pet Bettany and struck up a friendship with her. Pet apologized to her other friends for taking up with Kedzie, by the sufficient plea, "She gives such good food and drink at her boarding-house."

Kedzie found Pet intensely comforting, since Pet was full of gossip and satirized with contempt the people who had been treating Kedzie with contempt. It is mighty pleasant to hear of the foibles of our superiors. The illusion of rising is acquired by bringing things down to us as well as by rising to them. When Pet told Kedzie something be-



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littling about somebody big, Kedzie felt herself enlarged.

Pet had another influence on Kedzie. Pet was no more contemptuous of aristocrats than she was of people who were good or tried to be or, failing that, kept up a decent pretense.

Pet made a snobbery of vice and had many an anecdote of the lapses of the respectable and the circumspectable. Her railing way brought virtue itself into disrepute, and Kedzie was frightened out of her last few senses. She fell under the tyranny of the risqué, which is as fell as the tyranny of the prudish.

Prissy Atterbury had told Pet without delay of meeting Jim Dyckman at Charity's home. Now that Pet was a crony of Kedzie's, she recalled the story.

FINDING Kedzie one day suffering from an attack of scruples, and declining to accept an invitation because "Jim might not like it," Pet laughed: "Oh, Jim! What right has he got to kick? He didn't lose much time getting back to his Charity Coe after he married you."

"His Charity Coe!" Kedzie gasped. "What do you mean by his Charity Coe?"

"Why, his old reliable sweetheart. He's been silly about her since babyhood. When she married Pete Cheever, he moped like a sick hound. And didn't he beat up Pete in a club only a few days before he married you?"

This was all news to Kedzie, and it sickened her. She demanded more poison, and Pet ladled it out joyously. She told Kedzie how Prissy Atterbury found Jim at Charity's house, but Kedzie remembered vividly that Jim had said he met Charity on the street. And now she had caught him in a lie, a woman-lie! He was not there to explain that he visited Charity in Kedzie's behalf, and if he had explained, it would only have embittered her the more.

Being quite convinced now of Jim's perfidy, she denied the possibility of it.

"Jim's square. I'm sure. There couldn't be anything wrong with him. And Mrs. Cheever is an awful prig, everybody says."

Pet whooped with laughter: "They're the worst sort. Why, only a couple of

years ago Jim and Charity were up in the Adirondacks alone together. Prissy Atterbury caught them sneaking back."

So one lie was used to bolster another. The firmest structures can be thus established by locking together things that will not stand alone—as soldiers stack arms. Pet went on stacking lies, and Kedzie grew more and more distressed, then infuriated. Her bitterness against Charity grew the more acrid. Charity's good repute became now the white-wash on a sepulcher of corruption. Kedzie's resentment of the woman's imagined hypocrisy and of her husband's apparent duplicity blazed into an eagerness for vengeance—the classic vengeance of punishing a crime by committing another of the sort. Like revenges like: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a loyalty for a loyalty.

CHAPTER LXV

BUT now, as often happens in vice as in virtue, Kedzie had the willingness but not the resolution.

Practice makes perfect, though, and Kedzie was learning to be downright bad, though yet awhile she gave but stingy reward to her assiduous cavaliers. She was what Pet called a *demi-veuve* and unprofitable to the men she used as weapons of her revenge against the innocent and unwitting husband.

There was another factor working toward her debasement, and that was the emancipation of her pocketbook. It was a fairy's purse now, and she could not scatter her money faster than she found it renewed. Her entertainments grew more lavish and more reckless. She had an inspiration at length: she would put Jim's yacht into commission and take a party of friends on a cruise, well chaperoned, of course.

She sent instructions to the master of the vessel to get steam up. Knudsen sent back word that he would have to have an order from the boss. She promised to have him discharged and in her anger fired a telegram off to Jim demanding that he rebuke the surly skipper and order the boat out.

The telegram found Jim in a state of doldrums. The food had turned

against him; homesickness was like a fever in him; and the monotony of the routine had begun to get his nerves. He was startled and enraged at Kedzie's request for permission to go yachting, and he fired back a telegram:

Knudsen was right I am astonished at your suggestion do not approve in the slightest.

He regretted his anger when it was too late. Kedzie, who had already made up her list of guests and received their hilarious acceptances, was compelled to withdraw the invitations. She would have bought a yacht of her own, but she was not allowed so large a fund. She could not afford it. She, Mrs. Dyckman, wanted something and could not afford it! What was the use of anything, anyhow?

Times had changed for Kedzie indeed, when the little beggar from the candy-store who had cried once when Skip Magruder, the bakery waiter, refused to take her to the movies twice in one Sunday, was crying now because her miser of a husband forbade her a turbine yacht as a plaything.

She was crushed with chagrin, and she felt completely absolved of the last obligation. What kind of a brute had she married, who would go away on a military picnic among his nice, warm cacti, and deny his poor, deserted wife a little boat-ride and a breath of fresh air? If she had had any lingering inclination to visit Jim in Texas, she gave it up now. She rented a house at Newport and took Pet Bettany along for a companion—at Kedzie's expense.

Charity Coe Cheever was visiting Mrs. Noxon again, and Kedzie snubbed her haughtily when she met her at the Casino or Bailey's Beach. Kedzie was admitted to that sacred surf of the Spouting Rock Association now, and she was as pretty a naiad as there was.

But now she met occasional rebuffs from certain people, not only because she was common, but because she was reputed to be fast. When the gossip-peddlers brought her this fierce verdict, she was hardened enough to scorn the respectables as frumps. She grew a little more impudent than ever, and her pout began to take the form of a sneer.

She lingered in and about Newport

till the autumn came. Occasional excursions on other people's yachts or in her own cars or to house-parties broke the season, but she loved Newport. Jim's name had given her entry to places and sets whence nobody quite had the courage or the authority to dismiss her.

A LITTLE sympathy is a dangerous thing. Married people run a great risk unless they keep theirs strictly mutual and for home consumption.

At Newport there was a very handsome fool named Jake Vanderveer, distantly related to both the Vander Veers and the Van der Veers. He was even more distantly related to his own wife at the time Kedzie met him.

Pet Bettany had told Kedzie what a rotter Mrs. Jake was, and Kedzie felt awfully sorry for Jakie. So did Jakie. He was sophomoric enough to talk about his broken heart, and she was sophomoric enough to suffer for him most enjoyably.

Jakie said he believed in running away from grief. Kedzie ran with him for company. People's tongues ran just as fast. Jakie was making a lot of money in Wall Street and trying to drown his sorrows there. Kedzie was thrilled by his jargon of the market, and he taught her how to read the confetti streamers that pour out of the ticker. Jakie confided to her a great scheme.

"The only way I can keep that wife of mine from spending all my money is to spend it first."

"You're a genius!" Kedzie said. A woman usually approves almost any scheme for keeping money away from another woman.

"I'm going to make a killing next week," said Jakie, "and I'm going just quietly to put a couple of thou' up for my little pal Kedzie. You can't lose. If you win, you can buy yourself five thousand dollars' worth of popcorn."

Kedzie was enraptured. At last she would have some money that she didn't have to drag out of her husband. She prayed the Lord for a rising market.

Then Mrs. Dyckman sent for her. When Kedzie called, the servants were extremely solemn. Kedzie had to wait till the doctor left. He was very solemn too.



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It is monotony, not bullets that our soldier boys dread. No fear, when the time comes, they will uphold bravely the traditions that are dear to every loyal American heart. But in the training camps and during the months of forced inaction there are going to be some tedious, home-sick days—days the Kodak can make more cheerful.

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KEDZIE found her mother-in-law in bed. She looked like a small mountain after a snowstorm. It was strange to Kedzie to find one so mighty brought low, and speaking in so tiny a voice. Her husband was there, and he was haggard with sympathy and alarm—a very elephant in terror. He was less courteous than usual to Kedzie, and he left the room at his wife's signal. Mrs. Dyckman was more gentle than ever.

"Draw your chair up close, my child," she whispered, "I want to have a little talk with you, and my voice is weak."

Kedzie was alarmed enough to revert to a simple phrase: "I'm awful sorry you're sick. Are you very sick?"

"Very. There's such a lot of me, you know. It's disgusting. I've scared my poor husband to death. I'm glad Jim isn't here to be worried. I hope I'll not have to send for him—but I'd like to."

Kedzie felt a little quiver of alarm. She did not quite want Jim to come back just yet. She had grown used to his absence. His return would deprive poor Jakie of solace.

Mrs. Dyckman took Kedzie's hand and stared at her sadly.

"You're looking a little tired, my dear, if you'll forgive me for being frank. I'm very old, and I very much want you and Jim to win out. Lying here, I take things too anxiously, I suppose, but—I'm frightened. I don't want my boy and you to go the way so many other couples do. He's left you because his country needed him, or thought it did. It wouldn't look well to have him come back and find that in his absence you had forgotten him—now, would it?"

"Why, Mrs. Dyckman!" Kedzie gasped, getting her hand away. Mrs. Dyckman groped for it and took it back.

"Don't be vexed. Or if you must be, pout as you used to. You mustn't grow hard, my child. Your type of beauty doesn't improve with cynicism. You must think sweet thoughts or simply be petulant when you're angry. Don't grow hard! If nothing else will move you, let me appeal to your pride. You are traveling with a hard crowd, a cruel pack, Miss Bettany's pack, and a silly lot of men like Jake Vanderveer. And you mustn't, my child. You just mustn't get hard and brazen. Couldn't you give

up Miss Bettany? She's an absolutely unprincipled creature. She's bad, and you must know it, don't you?"

Kedzie could not answer, or would not. Mrs. Dyckman's voice grew poignant.

"I've lived so long and seen so much unhappiness. There is so much tragedy across the water. My poor daughter has had a cable that her husband's brother has been killed in France. Her husband has been wounded, and she is sailing. So many men, so many, many men are dying. The machine guns go like scythes all day long, and they lie out there in the shrapnel rain—oh, it is unbelievable. And Europe's women are undergoing such endless sorrow; every day over there the lists contain so many names. So many of Cicely's friends have perished. Life never was so full of sorrow, my dear; but it is such noble sorrow that it seems as if nobody had any right to any other kind of sorrow.

"You are young, dear child. You are lonely and restless; but you don't realize how loathsome it is to other people to see such recklessness going on over here while such lofty souls are going to death in droves over there. The sorrow you will bring on yourself and all of us, and on poor Jim, will be such a hateful sorrow, my dear, such an unworthy grief."

Kedzie choked, and mumbled: "I don't think I know what you mean."

MRS. DYCKMAN petted her hand: "I don't think you do. I hope not. But take an old woman's word for it, be—be Cæsar's wife."

"Cæsar's wife?" Kedzie puzzled. "What did she do?"

"It was what she didn't do. Well, I haven't the strength—or the right, perhaps—to tell you any more. . . . Yes, I will; I must say this much: you are the subject of very widespread criticism, and Jim is being pitied."

"Me criticised? Jim pitied? Why? For what?"

"For the things you do, my dear—the places you go and the hours you keep—and the friends you keep."

"That's disgusting!" Kedzie snarled. "The long-tongued gossips! They ought to be ashamed of themselves."



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Mrs. Dyckman's fever began to mount. She dropped Kedzie's hand and tugged at the coverlet.

"You'd better go, my dear. I apologize. It's useless! When did age ever gain anything by warning youth! I'm an old fool, and you're a young one. And nothing will stop your ambition to run through life to the end of it and get all you can out of it."

Kedzie felt dismissed and rose in bewildered anger. Mrs. Dyckman heaved herself to one elbow and pointed her finger at Kedzie.

"But keep away from Jake Vanderveer! and Pet Bettany! Or—or—send my nurse, please."

She fell back gasping, and Kedzie flew, in a fear that the old lady would die of a stroke and Kedzie be blamed for it forever. Kedzie was so blue and terrified that she had to send for Jake Vanderveer to keep from going crazy.

Mrs. Dyckman did not die, but she did not get well, and Jim's father wrote him that he'd better resign and come home. It would do his mother a world of good, and he was doing the country no good down there.

Jim was alarmed; he wrote out his resignation and submitted it to his colonel, who showed him a new order from the War Department announcing that no more resignations would be accepted except on the most urgent grounds. Idleness was destroying the Guard faster than a campaign. Jim returned to the doldrums with a new resentment. He was a prisoner now.

He had gone to Texas to find war, and his wife went to Newport to find gayety. It was to Newport that the war came. On October 7th the old town was stirred by something genuinely new in sensations—the arrival of a German war submarine, the *U-53*.

CHAPTER LXVI

A FREIGHT submarine, the *Deutschland*, had recently excited wonderment by crossing from Helgoland to Norfolk with a cargo. But here was a warship that dived underneath the British blockade.

The dead of the *Lusitania* were still

unrequited and unburied, but the Germans had graciously promised President Wilson to sink no more passenger ships without warning, and they had been received back into the indulgence of the superpatient neutrals.

And now came the undersea boat to test American hospitality. It was received with amazed politeness, and the news flew through Newport, bringing the people flocking like children. An American submarine conducted its guest to anchorage. Mail for the German ambassador was put ashore, and visits were exchanged with the commandant of the Narragansett Bay naval station. In three hours the vessel, not to overstay the bounds of neutral hospitality, returned to the ocean.

A flotilla of American destroyers conveyed it outside and calmly watched while the monster halted nine ships off Nantucket, graciously permitted their crews and passengers to take themselves, but no belongings, into open boats, and then torpedoed the vessels one after another.

The destroyers of the United States navy stood by like spectators on the bleachers, and when the submarine had quite finished the supply of ships, the obliging destroyers picked up the fragments in the open boats and brought them ashore. And the *U-53* went on unchecked, after one of the most astounding spectacles in the history of the sea.

CHARITY COE and other women waited on the docks till midnight, arranging refuge for more than two hundred victims. It was a novel method for getting into Newport mansions. Even Kedzie took in an elderly couple. She tried to get a few young men, but they were all taken.

The next morning there was a panic in Wall Street, and nearly two million shares were flung overboard, with a loss of five hundred million dollars in market values. Marine insurance-rates rose from a hundred to five hundred per cent, and it seemed that our ocean trade would be driven from the free seas. But everything had been done according to the approved etiquette for U-boats, and there was not even a protest.

All this meant little to Kedzie except that Jake Vanderveer was caught and ruined in the market slump. Otherwise he might have ruined Kedzie, for he had been dazzling her more and more with his lavish courtship. When he lost his money he left Newport, and Kedzie never knew how narrow an escape she had. She only knew that she did not make the money she dreamed of. She said that war was terrible.

A pious soul would have credited Providence with the rescue. But Providence had other plans. One of the victims of the *U-53* was a young English aviator, the Marquess of Strathdene. If the *U-53* had not sunk the ship that carried him, Kedzie would have had an exceedingly different future.

STRATHDENE had been a spend-thrift, a libertine and a loafer till the war shook England. He had been well shaken too, and unsuspected emotions were aroused. He had learned to operate a flying machine and insulted the law of gravity with the same impudence he had shown for the laws of morality.

In due time he was joined to an air-squadron. He risked his life every moment he was aloft, but the danger became a negligible thing in the thrill of the liveliest form of big-game hunting thus far known to man. In mid-sky he stalked his prey and was stalked by it; he chased German *Taubes* or was chased by them into clouds and out of them, up hill and down dale in ether-land amid the showers from below of the raining anti-aircraft guns. Strathdene knew how to dodge and duck, turn somersaults, volplane, spiral, coast downward in an invisible toboggan-slide or climb into heaven on an airy stair.

The sky was full of such flocks; the gallant American gentlemen who made up the *Escadrille Lafayette* went clouding with him, and Mr. Robert Lorraine, the excellent actor, and Mr. Vernon Castle, the amiable revolutionist of the dance, and many and many another eagle-heart. Strathdene scouted valuably during the first battle of the Somme, his companion working the gun or the camera or the bomb-dropping lever as the need might be.

And then one day a burst of shrapnel from the remote earth shattered his plane and him. A slug of iron went upward through his hip, and another nicked off a bit of his shoulder. But he brought his machine safely to earth and toppled into the arms of the hospital aids—went backward in a litter to a motor-ambulance, to a receiving station, then back in a train, then across the channel, then across the ocean in a steamer, to be sunk by a submarine and brought ashore in a lifeboat. Strathdene had pretty well tested the modern systems of vehicular transportation.

The surgeons mended his wounds, but his nerves had felt the shrapnel. That was why the sea-voyage had been advised. Strathdene seemed to have a magnetic gift for adventure. An anti-aircraft gun brought him down from the clouds, and a submersible ship came up from the deeps to have a try at him. Before long Kedzie would be saying that fate had taken all this trouble just to bring him and her together.

In the transfer from the ship to the lifeboat Strathdene's wounds were wrenched and his sufferings renewed. He was lucky enough to fall into the hands of Charity Coe Cheever. She was a war-nurse of experience, and he was soon well enough to try to flirt with her. But she had been experienced also in the amorous symptoms of convalescent soldiers, and she repressed his ardor skillfully. She put an ice-cap on his heart as on his head.

But when he was up and about again, he met Kedzie. It seemed to be her business to take away from Charity Coe all of Charity's conquests, and the young Marquess found her hospitable to his hunger for friendship. Before the first day's acquaintance was over, Kedzie was as fascinated by his chatter as *Desdemona* by *Othello's* anecdotes.

ONE night Kedzie dreamed that she was a Marquessess, or whatever the wife of a Marquess would be styled.

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pany of a marquess—and on such an errand!

What on earth was Skip doing so far from the Bronx and in the environs of Newport, of all places? It did not occur to her that Skip might ask her the same question.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE terror Skip's footsteps inspired was confirmed by the unforgettable voice that came across her icy shoulder-blades. He slapped the china and silver down with the familiar bravura of a quick-lunch waiter, and her heart sank, remembering that she had once admired his skill!

The Marquess looked up at him with a glare of rebuke as Skip posed himself patiently with one hand, knuckles down, on the table, the other on his hip, and demanded with misplaced enthusiasm:

"Well, folks, w'at's it goin' to be?"

The Marquess had been somewhat democratized by his life in the army, and being a true Briton, he always expected the worst in America. He proceeded to order a light supper that would not take too long. Skip crushed him by saying:

"Aint the little lady takin' nothin'?"

Kedzie was afraid to speak. She put her finger on the menu at a chafing-dish version of chicken, and the Marquess added it to his order. Skip shuffled away without recognizing Kedzie. She waited only for his exit to make her own.

IT was terrifying enough to realize that the moment Skip caught a glimpse of her he would hail her noisily and tell the Marquess all about her. There still lingered in Kedzie a little more honesty than snobbery, and she felt even less dread of being "bawled out" by a waiter in the presence of a marquess than of having Skip Magruder know that she was in such a place even with a marquess. Skip had been good to her and had counseled her to go straight.

She felt no gratitude toward him now; but she could not face his contempt. That would be degradation beneath degradation. She was disgusted with everything and everybody, includ-

ing herself. The glamour of the escapade was dissipated. The excitement of an illicit amour, so delicious in so many farces, so tenderly dramatic in so many novels, had curdled. She saw what an ugly business she was in, and she was revolted.

Kedzie waited only to hear the swinging door whiff after Skip's syncopated feet; then she whispered sharply across the table to the Marquess:

"Take me out of this awful place. I don't know what I'm doing here. I won't stay—not a moment!"

"But we've ordered—"

"You stay and eat, then. I won't stop here another minute."

She rose. She smothered the Marquess' protests about the awkwardness, the ludicrousness, of such a flight.

"What will the waiter think?" he asked, being afraid of a waiter, though of no one else. Kedzie did not care what the waiter thought, so long as he did not know whom he thought it of. Strathdene gave the head waiter a bill and followed Kedzie out. He was hungry, angry and puzzled.

SKIP MAGRUDER never knew what a chaperon he had been. If Providence managed the affair, it chose an odd instrument, and intervened as usual at the last moment. Providence would save itself a good deal of work if it came round a little earlier in these cases. Perhaps it does and finds nobody awake.

Strathdene demanded explanations. Kedzie told him the truth, but not all of it.

"It suddenly swept over me," she gasped, "how horrible it was for me to be there."

She wept with shame, and when he would have consoled her, she kept him aloof. The astonishing result of the outing was that both came home better. It suddenly swept over Strathdene that Kedzie was innocent than he had dreamed. She was good! By gad, she was good enough to be the wife even of a Strathdene. He told Kedzie that he wished to God he could marry her. She answered fervently that she wished to God he could.

He asked her: "You don't really love that Dyckman, do you?"

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"I don't really love anybody but you," said Kedzie. "You are the first man I have really truly loved."

She meant it, and it may have been true. She said it with sincerity, at least. One usually does. At any rate, it sounded wonderful to Strathdene, and he determined to make her his. He would let England muddle along somehow till he made this alliance with the beautiful Missourienne. But Kedzie's plight was again what it had been; she had a husband extra. In some cases the husband is busy enough with his own affairs to let the lover trot alongside, like the third horse which the Greeks called the *pareoros*. But neither Jim nor Strathdene would be content with that sort of team-work, and Kedzie least of all.

She and Strathdene agreed that love would find the way, and Kedzie suggested that Jim would probably be decent enough to arrange the whole matter. He had an awfully clever lawyer, too.

Strathdene had braved nearly every peril in life except marriage. He was determined to take a shy at that. He and Kedzie talked their honeymoon plans with the boyishness and girlishness of nineteen and sixteen.

Then Kedzie remembered Gilfoyle. She had thanked her stars that she told Dyckman the truth about him in time. And now she was confronted with the same situation. Since her life was repeating its patterns, it would be foolish to ignore the lessons. So after some hesitation she told the Marquess that Jim Dyckman was not her first but her second. She told it very tragically, made quite a good story of it.

But the Marquess had been intrepid enough to laugh when, out of a large woolly cloud a mile aloft, a German flying machine had suddenly charged him at a hundred miles an hour. He was calm enough now to laugh at the menace of Kedzie's past rushing out of the pink cloud about her.

"The more the merrier," he said. "The third time's the charm."

He sighed when he was alone and thought it rather shabby that Cupid should land him at last with a second-handed, a third-hearted arrow. But after

all, these were war-times. The arrow felt very cozy.

CHAPTER LXVIII

UNSELFISHNESS is an acquired art. Children rarely have it. That is why the Greeks represented love of a certain kind as a boy, selfish, treacherous, ingratiating, blind to appearances, naïf, gracefully ruthless.

Kedzie and Strathdene were enamored of each other. They were both zealots for experience, restless and heedless in their zest of life. As soon as they were convinced of their love, every restraint became an illegal restraint, illegal because they felt that only the law of love had jurisdiction over them.

When Kedzie received a telegram from Jim that he had secured a leave of absence for thirty days and would be in Newport in four, she felt cruelly used. She forgot how she had angled for Jim and hustled him into matrimony.

She was afraid of him now. She thought of him as many women in captured cities once regarded and have recently again regarded the triumphant enemy—as one who would count beauty the best part of the booty.

Her loyalty to Strathdene was compromised; her delicacy was horrified. She was distraught with her plight.

She had to tell the news to Strathdene, and he went into frenzies of jealousy. She had pledged herself to be his as soon as she could lift the Dyckman mortgage. If a man is ever going to be jealous, he should certainly find occasion for the passion when he is betrothed to the wife of a returning soldier. Strathdene ought to have been on his way back to the aviation camp, but he had earned the right to humor his nerves, and Kedzie was testing them beyond endurance.

IT was a tragical-comical dilemma for Kedzie. Even she, with her gift for self-forgiveness, could not quite see how she was to explain prettily to her husband that in his absence she had fallen in love with another man. Wives are not supposed to fall in love while their hus-

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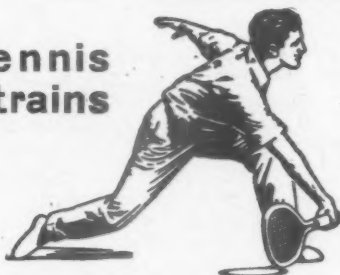
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bands are at the wars. It has been done, but it is hard to prettify.

Kedzie beat her forehead in vain for a good-looking explanation. She was still hunting one when Jim came back. He telegraphed her that he would come right through to Newport and asked her to meet him at the train. She dared not refuse. She simply could not keep her glib promises to Strathdene. It seemed almost treason to the country for a wife to give her warrior a cold welcome after his tropical service. She met him at the Newport station. He was still in uniform. He had taken no other clothes to Texas with him and had not stopped to buy any. He was too anxious about his mother to pause in New York. He had telegraphed his valet to pack his things and bring them to Newport.

Kedzie found him very brown and gaunt, far taller even than she remembered. She was more afraid of him than ever. Strathdene was only a little taller than she. She was afraid to tell Jim that she was another's.

But she made a poor mimicry of perfect bliss. Jim was not critical. She was more beautiful than he remembered her. He told her so, and she was flattered by his courtship, miserably treacherous as she felt. She was proud to be a soldier's wife. She was jealous now of his concern for his mother. He had to go see her first. He was surprised to learn that Kedzie was not living with her. His mother had begun to improve from the moment she had Jim's telegram. But her eyes on Kedzie were terrible.

Jim did not notice the tension. He was too happy. He was sick of soldiering. His old uniform was like a convict's stripes. He was childishly ambitious to get into long trousers again. For nearly half a year he had buttoned his breeches at the knee, housed his calves in puttees and his feet in army brogans.

It was like a Christmas morning among new toys for him to put on mufti and take it off. A bathtub full of hot water was a paradise regained. Evening clothes with a big white shirt and a top hat were robes of ascension. Before day-break the first morning he terrified Kedzie by starting up in his sleep with a gasp. "Was that reveille? I'll be late!"

The joy of finding himself no longer in a tent and of falling back on his pillow was worth the bad dream. Life was one long bad dream to Kedzie. She was guilty whichever way she turned, and afraid of both men.

Jim had a valet to wait on him. He had the problem of selecting his scarf and his socks for the morning. Jim had come into a lot of money. He had been earning a bank-clerk's salary with no way of spending it. And now he had a bank to spend and plenty of places to throw it.

But it was hard for him to believe that he was a free man again. He was amazed to find Newport without cactus and without a scorpion. He kept looking for a scorpion on his pillow. He found one there but did not recognize her.

Jim was as much of a parvenu in Newport as Kedzie had ever been. He swept her away at times by his juvenile enthusiasm, and she neglected Strathdene atrociously for a week.

A large part of the colony had decamped for New York and Boston and Chicago, but those that remained made a throng for Jim. His mother was not well enough to be moved back to New York, but his sister had reached England safely, and he was happy.

But he was the only one who was. His mother was bitter against Kedzie for having fed the gossips. Kedzie was assured that life with Jim had nothing new to offer, and she resented him as a barrier between herself and the glory of her future with Strathdene and "the stately homes of England."

Her mother and father arrived in Newport. Kedzie tried to suppress them for fear that Strathdene might feel that they were the last two back-breaking straws. But she needed a confidante, and she made her mother one.

Mrs. Thropp, like Kedzie, had an ambition that expanded as fast as opportunity allowed. She was dazzled by the thought of being elevated to the peerage. She supposed it made her a relative of royalty. She who had once dreamed of being neighborly with the great Mrs. Dyckman was now imagining herself exchanging crocheting formulas with Queen Mary.

But Kedzie had to cling to Strath-

dene with one hand while she released herself from the Dyckmans with the other.

She had a dreadful feeling that she might lose them both if she were not exceedingly careful and exceedingly lucky.

Help came to her unexpectedly from Charity Coe — unexpectedly, though Charity was always helping Kedzie.

CHAPTER LXIX

THERE is hardly anything our eyes bring us that is more hideous than known disloyalty successfully masquerading as fidelity. The Judas-kiss is not to be surpassed in human detestation.

Charity Coe had been tormented by the spectacle of her friend's wife flirting recklessly with the young Marquess of Strathdene, while her husband was at the Border with the troops. But she was far more sharply wrung when she saw Kedzie flirting with her husband, playing the devoted wife with all her might and getting away with it to perfection.

With almost all the world in uniform, America welcomed the sight of one of her own men returned even from what was rather a siesta than a campaign, and old Mrs. Noxon insisted on giving a big party for Jim. She insisted so strongly that Kedzie did not dare refuse, though she had vowed never to step inside the grounds where she had made her Newport début as a hired nymph.

Charity tried to escape by alleging a journey to New York, but Mrs. Noxon browbeat her into staying. Charity did not know that Strathdene was invited till she saw him come in with the crowd. Neither did Kedzie. Old Mrs. Noxon may have invited him for spite against Kedzie or just as an international courtesy to the most distinguished foreigner in town.

She introduced Jim and the Marquess, saying:

"You great warriors should know one another."

Jim felt sheepish because he had been to no war, and Strathdene felt sheepish because Jim was so much taller than he. He looked up at him as Napoleon looked enviously up at men who had no glory

but their altitude. Strathdene was also sheepish, because Jim said very simply:

"Do you know my wife?"

If he had not been so tall that he saw only the top of Kedzie's coiffure, he would have seen that her face was splashed with red. She mumbled something, while Strathdene stammered: "Er—yes—I have had that privilege." He felt a sinking sensation as deadly as when he had his first fall at the aviation school.

KEDZIE dragged Jim away and paid violent attention to him all through dinner. Her sympathy was entirely for her poor Strathdene. She was afraid he would commit suicide or return to England without her, and she could not imagine how to get rid of Jim. Then she caught sight of Charity Coe, and greeted her with a smile of sincere delight.

For once Kedzie loved Charity. Suddenly it came upon her what a beautiful solution it would be for everybody if Jim could take Charity and leave Kedzie free to take Strathdene. She told herself that Jim would be ever so much happier so, for the poor fellow would suffer terribly when he found that his Kedzie really could not pretend to love him any longer. Kedzie felt quite tearful over it. She was an awfully good hearted little thing. To turn him over to Charity would be a charming arrangement—perfectly decent and no harm to anybody. If only the hateful laws did not forbid the exchange—dog-on 'em, anyway!

The more Kedzie studied Charity, the more suitable she seemed as a successor. Her heart warmed to her, and she forced an opportunity to unload Jim on Charity immediately after dinner.

There was music for the encouragement of conversation, an expensively famous prima donna and a group of strings brought down from the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The prima donna sang *Donna Elvira's* ferocious aria of indignation at discovering *Don Giovanni's* Don Juanity.

Charity, noting that Kedzie had flitted straight to Strathdene and was trying to appease his cold rage, felt an envy

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of the prima donna, who was enabled to express her feelings at full lung-power with the fortissimo reinforcement of several powerful musicians. The primeval woman in Charity longed for just such a howling prerogative, but the actual Charity was so cravenly well-bred that she dared not even say to her dearest friend:

"Jim, old man, you ought to go over and wring the neck of that little cat of yours."

Jim sat beaming at Kedzie, and Kedzie beamed back while she murmured sweet everythings to her little Marquess. Jim seemed to imagine that he had left her in such a pumpkin shell as *Mr. Peter P. Pumpkineater* left his wife in, and kept her so very well. But Kedzie was not that kind of kept or keepable woman.

Jim would have expected that if Kedzie were guilty of any spiritual corruption, it would show on her face. People will look for such things. But Kedzie was still young and pretty and ingenuous and seemed incapable of duplicity. And indeed such treachery is no more than a childish turning from one toy to another. The traitors and traitresses have no more sense of obligation than a child feels for a discarded doll.

JIM paid Charity the uncomfortable compliment of feeling enough at home with her to say:

"Well, Charity, that little wife of mine takes to the English nobility like a duck seeing its first pond, eh?"

"She seems to be quite at her ease," was all that Charity could say. Now she felt herself a sharer in the wretched intrigue, as treacherous as Kedzie, no better friend than Kedzie was wife, because with a word she could have told Jim what he ought to have known, what he was almost the only person in the room that did not know. Yet her jaw locked and her tongue balked at the mere thought of telling him. She protected Kedzie and not Jim—felt it abominable, but could not brave the telling.

She resolved that she would rather brave the ocean and get back to Europe, where there were things she could do. The support of all the French orphans she had adopted had made deep inroads

in her income, but her conscience felt the deeper inroads of neglected duty.

It was like Charity to believe that she had sinned heinously when she had simply neglected an opportunity for self-sacrifice. When other people applauded their own benevolence if they said, "How the soldiers must suffer! Poor fellows!" Charity felt ashamed that her sympathies were not mobilized for action.

A great impatience to be gone rendered her suddenly frantic. While she encouraged Jim to talk of his experiences in Texas, she was making her plans to sail on the first available boat.

If the boat were sunk by a submarine or a mine, death in the strangling seas would be preferable to any more of this drifting among the strangling problems of a life that held no promise of happiness for her. She felt gagged with the silence imposed upon her by the code in the very face of Kedzie's disloyalty, a disloyalty so loathsome that seeing was hardly believing.

It seemed inconceivable that a man or woman pledged in holy matrimony could ever be tempted to an alien embrace. And yet she knew dozens of people who made a sport of infidelity. Her own husband had found temptation stronger than his pledge. She wondered how long he would be true to Zada, or she to him. Charity had suffered the disgrace of being insufficient for her husband's contentment, and now Jim must undergo the same disgrace with Kedzie. It was a sort of post-nuptial jilt.

Of course, Charity had no proof that Kedzie had been more than brazenly indiscreet with Strathdene; but that very indifference to gossip, that willingness to stir up slander, seemed so odious that nothing could be more odious, not even the actual crime. Besides, Charity found it hard to assume that a woman who held her good name cheap would hold her good self less cheap, since reputation is usually cherished longer than character.

In any case, Charity was smothering. Even Mrs. Noxon's vast drawing-room was too small to hold her and Jim and Kedzie and Strathdene. America was



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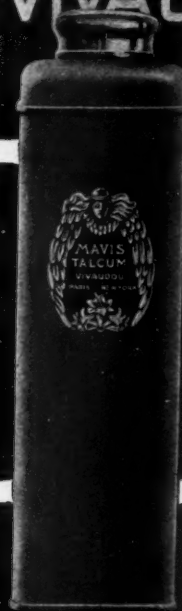
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too strait to accommodate that jangling quartet.

She rose abruptly, thrust her hand out to Jim and said:

"Good night, old man. I've got to begin packing."

"Packing—for where? New York?"

"Yes, and then France."

"I've told you before I won't let you go."

And then it came over him that he had no right even to be dejected and alarmed at Charity's departure. Charity felt in the sudden releasing of his hand-clasp some such sudden check. She smiled patiently and went to tell Kedzie good night.

Kedzie broke out, "Oh, don't go—yet!" and then caught herself. She also for quite a different reason must not regret Charity's departure. Charity smiled a smile of terrifying comprehension, shook her head and went her ways.

AND now Jim, released, wandered over and sat down by Kedzie just as she was telling Strathdene the most important things. She could not shake Jim. He would not talk to anybody else. She wished that Charity had taken Jim with her. Strathdene was as comfortable as a spy while Jim talked. Jim seemed so suspiciously amiable that Strathdene wondered how much he knew.

Jim did not look like the sort of man who would know and be complaisant, but even if he were ignorant, Strathdene was too outright a creature to relish the necessity for casual chatter with the husband of his sweetheart. He too made a resolution to take the first boat available. He would rather see a submarine than be one.

Strathdene also suddenly bolted, saying:

"Sorry, but I've got to run myself into the hangar. My doctor says I'm not to do any night-flying."

And now Kedzie was marooned with Jim. She was in a panic about Strathdene; a fantastic jealousy assailed her. To the clandestine all things are clandestine. What if he were hurrying away to meet Charity? Charity returned to Kedzie's black books, and Jim joined her there.

"Let's go home," said Kedzie, in the least honeymoony of tones.

Jim said: "All right, but why the sudden vinegar?"

"I hate people," said Kedzie.

"Are husbands people?" said Jim.

"Yes!" snapped Kedzie.

She smiled beatifically as she wrung Mrs. Noxon's hand and perjured herself like a parting guest. And that was the last smile Jim saw on her fair face that night.

He wondered why women were so damned unreasonably whimsical. They may be damned, but there is usually a reason for their apparent whims.

CHAPTER LXX

THE next day Kedzie was still cantankerous, as it was perfectly natural she should be. She wanted to be a marchioness and sail away to the peerful sky. And she could not cut free from her anchor. The Marquess was winding up his propeller to fly alone.

Jim, finding her the poorest of company, called on his mother. She was well enough to be very peevish. So he left her and wandered about the dull town. He had no car with him, and he saw a racer that caught his fancy. It had the lean, fleet look of a thoroughbred horse, and the dealer promised that it could triple the speed limit. He went out with a demonstrator, and the car made good the dealer's word. It ran with such zeal that Jim was warned by three different policemen on the Boston Post Road that he would be arrested the next time he came by in such haste.

He decided to try it out again at night on other roads. He told the dealer to fill up the tank and see to the lights. The dealer told the garage-man, and the garage-man said he would.

That evening at dinner Jim invited Kedzie to take a spin. She said she had to spend the evening with her mother, who was miserable. Jim said, "Too bad!" and supposed he'd better run in and say "Howd'ye do!" to the poor soul. Kedzie hastily said that she would be unable to see him. She would not even let Jim ride her over in his new buzz-wagon.

Again he made the profane comment to himself that women are unreasonable. Again this statement was due to ignorance of excellent reasons.

Kedzie had tried all day to get in touch with Strathdene. When she ran him down at length by telephone, he was dismally dignified and terrifyingly patriotic. His poor country needed him, and he must return.

This meant that Kedzie would lose her first and doubtless her last chance at a marquise. She pleaded for a conference. He assented eagerly, but the problem was where to confer. She dared not invite him to the house she had rented, for Jim would be there. She could not go to Strathdene's rooms at the Hilltop Inn. She thought of the apartment she had stowed her mother in, and asked him there. Then she telephoned her mother to suppress Dad and keep out of sight.

She was afraid to have Jim take her to her mother's address lest her woeful luck should bring Strathdene and Jim together at the door. That was the excellent reason for rebuffing her husband's courtesy and setting out alone.

Her mother was only too willing to abet Kedzie's forlorn hope. It was the forlornness of Kedzie that saved her. When Strathdene saw her in her exquisite despair, he was helpless. He was no Hun to break the heart of so sweet a being, and he believed her when she told him that she would die if he tried to cross the perilous ocean without her. She told him that she would throw herself on Jim's mercy the next day and implore her freedom. He would not refuse her, she assured him, for Jim was really awfully generous, whatever faults he might have.

Strathdene could well believe that she would have her way with her husband, inasmuch as he found her absolutely irresistible himself. The conference lasted long, and they parted at last as *Romeo* and *Juliet* would have parted if *Juliet* had been married to the *County Paris* before *Romeo* met her.

Kedzie even promised Strathdene that she would not wait till morning but would at once demand her husband's consent to the divorce. It was only on such an understanding that Strathdene

could endure to entrust his delicate treasure to the big brute's keeping.

Kedzie entered her home with her oration all primed. But Jim was not there. He did not come home that night. Kedzie's anxiety was not exactly flattering, but it was sincere.

She wondered if some accident had befallen him in his new car. She really could not bear the thought of losing another husband by a motor-accident. Suppose he should just be horribly crippled! Then she could never divorce him.

She hated her thoughts, but she could not be responsible for them. Her mind was like a lighthouse in a storm. It was not to blame for what wild birds the winds brought in from the black to dash against her soul.

But Jim was neither killed nor crippled. The cards still ran for Kedzie.

CHAPTER LXXI

SPEAKING of cards, Jim was like a gambler, with a new pack of them and nobody to play with.

He darted hither and yon in his racer, childishly happy in its paces, childishly lonely for somebody to show off before. As he ran along the almost deserted sea road, he passed the Noxon home.

He knew that Charity was visiting there. He wondered which of the lighted windows was hers. After much backing and filling, he turned in and ran up to the steps. He got out and was about to ring the bell when he heard a piano. He went along the piazza to a window and peering in saw Charity playing. She was alone in the music-room and very sadly beautiful.

He tapped on the window. She was startled—rose to leave the room. He tapped again, remembering an old signal they had had as boy and girl lovers. She paused. He could see her smile tenderly. She came forward to the window and stared out. He stared in. Only a pane of glass parted the tips of their flattened noses. It was a sort of sterilized Eskimo kiss.

The window was a door. Charity opened it and invited Jim in, wondering but strangely comforted. He invited her out. He explained about his gorgeous

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new car and his loneliness and begged her to take the air.

She put back her hands to indicate her inappropriate costume, a flimsy evening gown of brilliant color.

"Mrs. Noxon has gone out to dinner. I was to go with her, but I begged off. I'm going to New York to-morrow, and I was blue and—"

"And so am I. I've got an extra coat in my car, and the night is mild."

"No, I'd better not."

"Aw, come along!"

"No-o—"

"Yes!"

"All right. I'll get a veil for my hair."

SHE closed the French window and hurried away. She reappeared at the front door and shut it stealthily after her.

"Nobody saw me go. You must get me back before Mrs. Noxon comes home, or there'll be a scandal."

"Depend on me!" said Jim.

Muffling their laughter like two run-aways, they stole down the steps. Her high-heeled slippers slipped and she toppled against him. She caught him off his balance, and his arms went about her to save her and himself. If he had been Irish, he would have said that he destroyed himself, for she was so unexpectedly warm and silken and lithe that she became instantly something other than the Charity he had adored as a sad, sweet deity.

He realized that she was terribly a woman.

They were no longer boy and girl out on a gay little lark. They were a man unhappily married and a woman unhappily unmarried, setting forth on a wild steed for a wild ride through the reluctant autumn air. The neighboring sea gave out the stored-up warmth of summer, and the moon with the tilted face of a haloed nun yearned over them.

When Jim helped Charity into the car, her arm seemed to burn in his palm. He hesitated a moment, and a thought fluttered through his mind that he ought not to hazard the adventure. But another thought chased it away, a thought of the idiocy of being afraid, and an-

other thought of how impossible it was to ask her to get out and go back.

He found the coat, a heavy, short coat, and held it for her, saw her ensconced comfortably and stepped in and closed the door softly. The car went forward as smoothly as a skiff on a swift, smooth water.

Charity was not so solemn as Jim. She was excited and flattered by such an unforeseen diversion breaking in on her doleful solitude.

"It's been so long since a man asked me to go buggy-riding," she said, "that I've forgotten how to behave. I'm getting to be a regular old maid, Jim."

"Huh!" was all that Jim could think of.

It was capable of many interpretations—reproof, anger at fate, polite disbelief, deprecation.

Jim tried to run away from his peculiar and most annoying emotions. But Charity went with him. She looked back and said.

"Funny how the moon rides after us in her white limousine."

"Huh!" said Jim.

"Is that Mexican you're speaking?" she chided.

"I was just thinking," Jim growled.

"What?"

"Oh, nothing much—except what a ghastly shame it is that so—so—well, I don't know what to call you—but well, a woman like you—that you should be living alone with nothing better to do than run the gantlet of those God-awful submarines and probably get blown up and drowned, or worse yet, spend your days breaking your heart nursing a lot of poor mangled, groaning Frenchmen that get shot to pieces or poisoned with gas or— Oh, it's rotten! That's all it is: it's rotten!"

"Somebody has to take care of them."

"Oh, I know; but it oughtn't to be you. If there was any manhood in this country, you'd have Americans to nurse."

"There are Americans over there, droves of them."

"Yes, but they're not wearing our uniform. We ought to be over there under our own flag. I ought to be over there."

"Maybe you will be. I'll go on ahead and be waiting for you."

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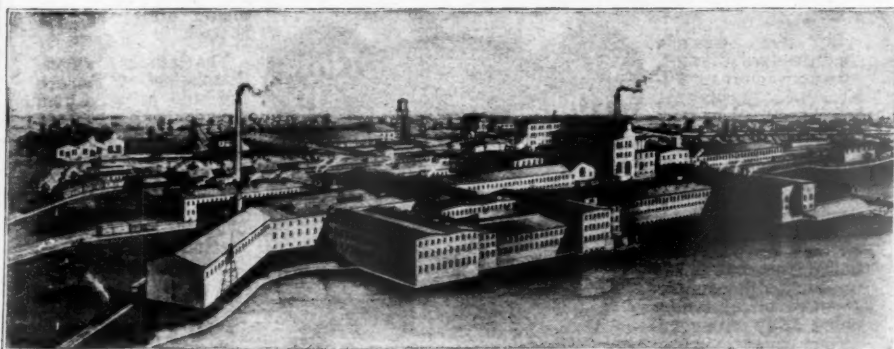
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There is nothing more pitiful than sorrow that tries to joke, and Jim groaned:

"Oh, Charity Coe! Charity Coe!"

He gripped the wheel to keep from putting his hand out to hers. And they went in silence, thinking in the epic elegy of their time.

JIM drove his car up to the end of Rhode Island and across to Tiverton; then he left the highway for the lonelier roads. The car charged the dark hills and galloped the levels, a black stallion with silent hoofs and dreadful haste. There was so much death, so much death in the world! The youth and strength and genius of all Europe were going over the brink eternally in a Niagara of blood.

And the sea that Charity was about to venture on, the sea whose estuaries lapped this sidelong shore so innocently with such tender luster under the gentle moon, was drawing down every day and every night ships and ships and ships with their treasures of labor and their brave crews till it seemed that the floor of the ocean must be populous with the dead.

Charity felt quite close to death. A very solemn tenderness of farewell endeared the beautiful world and all its doomed creatures. But most dear of all was this big, simple man at her side, the man she ought to have married. It was all her fault that she had not. She owed him a profound eternal apology, and she had not the right to pay the debt—that is, so long as she lived she had not the right. But if they were never to meet again—then she was already dying to him.

It was important that she should not depart this life without making restitution of what she owed. She had owed Jim Dyckman the love he had pleaded for from her and would not get from anyone else.

He had a right to love, and it was to be eternally denied to him. He would go on bitterly grieved and shamed to think that nobody could love him, for Charity had repulsed him, and some day he would learn that Kedzie had deceived him.

Lacking the courage to warn him against his wife, Charity felt that she must have at least the courage to say:

"Good-by, Jim. I have been loving you of late with a great love."

There would be no injury done to Kedzie thus, for Charity would speak as a ghost, an impalpable departed one. There would be no sin—only a beautiful expiation by confession. She was enfranchised of earthly restraints, enfranchised as the dead are from mortal obligations.

But the moods that are so holy, so pure and so vast while they are moods resent words. Words are like tin cups to carry the ocean in. It is no longer an ocean when a bit of it is scooped up. It is only a little brackish water, odious to drink and quenching no thirst.

Charity could not devise the first phrase of her huge and oceanic emotion. It would have been only a proffer of brine that Jim could not have relished from her. He understood better her silence. They went blindly on and on, letting the road lead them and the first whim decide which turn to take and which to pass. And so they were eventually lost in the land as they were lost in their mood.

And after a time of wonderful enthusiasm in their common grief, the realities began to claim them back. A loud report like a pistol-shot announced that the poetry of motion had become prose. Jim stopped the car and became a blacksmith while he went through the tool-box, found a jack for the wheel, laboriously unshipped the demountable rim, replaced it with the extra rim and tire and set forth again.

THE job had not improved the cleanliness of his hands or spared the chastity of his shirt-bosom. But the car had four wheels to go on, and they regained a main road at last and found a signboard announcing TIVERTON 18 MILES. That meant thirty miles to Newport.

Charity looked at her watch. It brought her back from the timelessness of her meditation to the world where the clock had a great deal to say about what was respectable and what not.

"Good Lord!" she groaned. "Mrs. Noxon is home long ago and scared or shocked to death. We must fly!"

They flew, angry, both of them, at having to hurry back to school and a withering reprimand, as if they were still mere brats. Gradually the car began to refuse the call for haste. Its speed sickened, gasped, died.

Jim swore quite informally, and raged: "I told that infernal hound to fill the tank. He forgot! The gas is gone."

Charity shrugged her shoulders.

"I deserved it," she said. "I only hope I don't get you into trouble. What will your wife say?"

"What won't she say? But I'm thinking about you."

"It doesn't matter about me. I've got nobody who cares enough to scold me."

They were suddenly illumined by the headlights of an approaching car. They shielded their faces from the glare instinctively. They felt honest, but they did not look honest out here together.

The car was checked and a voice called from the blur:

"Want any help?"

"No, thanks," Jim answered from his shadow.

The car rolled on. While Jim made a vain post-mortem examination of the car's machinery, Charity looked about for a guidepost. She found a large sign-board proclaiming VIEWCREST TAVERN 1 MILE. She told Jim; he said:

"I know of it. It has a bad name, but so long as the gasoline is good—I'll go get some. Make yourself at home." He paused. "I can't leave you alone here in the wilderness at midnight."

"I'll go along."

"In those high-heeled shoes?"

"And these low-necked gown!" sighed Charity. "Oh, what a fool, what a stupid fool I've been!"

BUT she set forth. Jim offered his arm. She declined it at first, but she was glad enough of it later. They made an odd-looking couple, both in evening dress, promenading a country road. All the wealth of both of them was insufficient to purchase them so much as a street-car ride. They were paupers—the slaves, not the captains of their

fate. Charity stumbled and tottered, her ankles wrenched by the ruts, her stilted slippers going to ruin. Jim offered to carry her. She refused indignantly. She would have accepted a lift from any other vehicle now, but none appeared. The only lights were in the sky, where a storm was practicing with fireworks.

"Just our luck to get drenched," said Jim.

It was about the only bad luck they escaped, but the threat of it lent Charity speed. They passed one farm, whose dogs rushed out and bayed at them carnivorously.

"That's the way people will talk when they find out about our innocent little picnic," said Charity.

"They're not going to find out," said Jim.

"Trying to keep it secret gives it a guilty look," said Charity.

"What people don't know won't hurt 'em," said Jim.

"What they do imagine will hurt us," said Charity.

They wearied of bandying fatigued epigrams, and dragged along. At the top of a knoll in a clandestine group of trees they found Viewcrest Inn. It was dark but for a dim light in the office. The door of that was locked.

Trade was dull, now that the Newport season was over and only an occasional couple from Fall River, Providence or New Bedford tested the diminished hospitality. But to-night there had been a concurrence of visitors. Jim rattled at the door. A waiter appeared, yawning candidly. He limped to the door with a gait that Kedzie would have recognized.

He peered out and shook his head, waving the intruders away. Jim shook the knob and glowered back.

The waiter, who, in the classic phrase, "was none other than" Skip Magruder, unlocked the door.

"Nothin' doin', folks," said Skip. "Standin' room only. Not a room left."

"I don't want any of your dirty rooms," said Jim. "I want some gasoline."

"Bar's closed," said Skip, who had a nimble wit.

"I said gasoline!" said Jim menacingly.



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"Sorry, boss, but the last car out took the last drop we had in the pump. We'll have some more to-morrow mornin'."

"My God!" Jim whispered. Charity collapsed in one of the office chairs.

Then the storm broke—a thunder-smash like the bolt of an indignant heaven. It turned on all the faucets above.

"Where's the telephone?" Jim demanded.

"T. D.," said Skip.

"What's that?"

"Temporary discontinued." Skip grew confidential. "The boss was a little slow on the pay, and they shut him off. We're takin' in a lot of dough to-night, though, and he'll prob'ly get it goin' to-morrow, all right."

To-morrow again! Jim snarled back at the pack of wolfish circumstances that were closing in on him. He turned to Charity.

"We've got to stay here."

Charity "went white," as the saying is. The rain streamed down.

"We aint a room left," said Skip.

"You've got to have," said Jim.

"Have to speak to the artshiteck," said Skip. Then he rubbed his head, trying to get out an idea by massage. "There's the poller. Big lounge there, but not made up. Would you and your wife wish the poller?"

He dragged the "wife" with a tone that nearly got him throttled. But Jim paused. A complicated thought held him. To protest that Charity was not his wife seemed hardly the most reassuring thing to do. He let the word go and ignored Skip's cynical intonation. Jim's knuckles ached to rebuke him, but he had not fought a waiter since his wild young days. And Skip was protected by his infirmity.

CHARITY was frightened and revolted, abject with remorse for such a disgusting consequence of such a sweet, harmless impulse. She was afraid of Jim's temper. She said:

"Take the parlor, by all means."

"All right," said Jim.

Skip fumbled about the desk for a big book, and finding it, opened it and handed Jim a pen.

"Register, please," said Skip.

"I will not."

"Rules of the house."

"What do I care about your rules!"

"Have to wake the boss, then."

"Give me the pen."

He started to write his own name; that left Charity's designation in doubt. He glanced at the other names. "Mr. and Mrs. George Washington" were there, "Mr. and Mrs. John Smith" twice, as well as "William Jones and wife."

Jim wondered if the waiter knew him. So many waiters did. At length, with a flash of angry impulse, he wrote: "James D—" paused, finished "ysart," hesitated again and then put "Mr. and Mrs." before it. Skip read and grinned. He did not know who Jim was, but he knew he was no Dysart.

SKIP led the way to the parlor upstairs, lighted the lights and hastily disappeared, fearing he might be asked to fetch something to eat or drink. He was so tired and sleepy that even the prospect of a tip did not interest him so much as the prospect of his cot in the attic, where he could dream that he was in New York again.

Jim and Charity looked at each other. Jim munched his own curses, and Charity laughed and cried together. Jim's arms had an instinct for taking her to his heart, but he felt that he must be more respectful than ever since they were in so respectless a plight. She never seemed purer and sadder to him than then.

She noted how haggard and dismal he looked, and said:

"Aren't you going to sit down?"

"No—not here," he said. "You curl up on that plush horror and get some rest."

"I will not!" said Charity.

"You will too," said Jim. "You're a wreck, and I ought to be shot. Get some sleep, for God's sake!"

"What becomes of you?"

"I'll scout around and find a place in the office. I think there is a billiard-room. If worst comes to worst, I'll do what Mrs. Leslie Carter did in a play I saw—sleep on the dining-room table."

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PERFUMER

"Nothing less than a table d'hôte will hold you," Charity smiled wanly.

"Don't worry about me. You go by-by and pray the Lord to forgive me and help us both."

He waved his hand to her in a heart-break of bemocked and benighted tenderness, and closed the door. He prowled softly about the office and the adjacent rooms, but found no place to sleep. He was in such a fever of wrath at himself that he walked out in the rain to cool his head. Then he sank into a chair, read an old Boston paper twice and fell asleep among the advertisements.

HE woke at daybreak. The rain had ended, and he wandered out in the chill, wet grounds of the shabby inn. The morning light was merciless on the buildings, on the leafless trees and on his own costume. The promised view from the crest was swathed in haze; so was his outlook on the future.

His fury at the situation grew as he pondered it. He was like a tiger in a pit. He raged as much at himself as at the people who would take advantage of him. The ludicrousness of the situation added the ultimate torment. He could not save Charity except by ingenious deceptions which would be a proof of guilt if they did not succeed miraculously.

The dress he was in and the dress she was in were the very habiliments of guilt. Getting back to Newport in evening clothes would be the advertisement of their escapade. His expansive shirt-bosom might as well have been a sandwich board. His broadcloth trousers and his patent leather pumps would be worse than rags.

And Charity had no hat. There was an unmistakable dressed-up eveningness about them both.

This struck him as the first evil to remedy. As with an escaped convict, his prime necessity was a change of clothes. There was only one way to manage that. He went back to the hotel and found a startled early-morning waiter sweeping out the office. Jim asked where the nearest telephone was, and learned that it was half a mile away at a farmhouse.

JIM turned up his collar, pulled down his motor cap and struck out along the muddy road. He startled the farmer's family, and their large hands were not wide enough to hide their wider smiles.

On the long hike hither, Jim had worked out his stratagem. He called up his house—or rather, Kedzie's house, in Newport, and after much delay got his yawning valet to the telephone. He never had liked that valet less than now.

"My car broke down out in the country," he explained, every syllable a sugarless quinine pill in his throat. "That is to say, the gasoline gave out. I am in my evening clothes; so-is—er—Mrs.—er—the lady I was with. I want you to bring me at once an outfit of day clothes, and a—one of my wife's long motor-coats—a very long one—and one of her small hats. Then get out my wife's limousine and send the suit-case and the coat and hat to me here at the Viewcrest Inn, and tell the chauffeur to bring an extra can of gasoline."

A voice with an intolerable smile in it came back.

"Very good, sir. I presume I'd better not waken Mrs. Dyckman?"

"Naturally not. I don't want to—er—alarm her."

"She was quite alarmed when she came home, sir, last night."

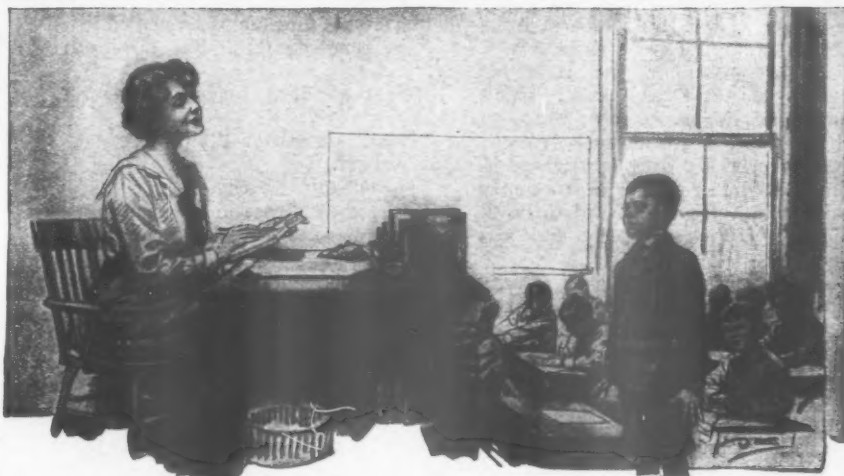
"Well, I'll explain when I see her. Do you understand the situation?"

"Perfectly, sir."

Jim writhed at that. But he had done his best, and he would take the worst.

THE farmer gave him a ride to the hotel in his milkwagon. When Jim rode up in a parody of state, he saw Charity peeping from the parlor window. The morning light had made the situation plain to her. It did not improve on inspection. It took very little imagination to predict a disastrous event, though Jim explained the felicity of his scheme. He had planned to have Charity ride in in the limousine alone, while he took his own car back with the gasoline that was on the way.

The twain were compelled by their costume to stay in the parlor together. They were ferociously hungry and



WHEN the teacher asked Johnny to spell "shampoo," he roguishly replied, "P-a-c-k-e-r."

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ordered breakfast at last. It took forever to get it, for guests of that hotel were not ordinarily early risers.

Skip Magruder, dragged from his slumbers to serve the meal, found Charity and Jim in the room where he had left them. He made such vigorous efforts to overlook their appearance in bedraggled dinner-clothes at a country breakfast that Jim threatened to break his head. Skip grew surly and was ordered out.

After breakfast, Jim and Charity waited and waited, keeping to the parlor lest the other guests see them.

At last the limousine arrived. As soon as he heard it coming, Jim hurried to the window to make sure that it was his—or rather his wife's.

It was—so much his wife's that she stepped out of it. Also her mother. Also her father. They advanced on the hotel.

Jim and Charity were stupefied. There was a look on Kedzie's face that frightened him.

"She means business," he groaned.

And Charity sighed:

"Divorce! And me to be named!"

"She won't do that. She owes you everything."

"What an ideal chance to pay off debt!"

"Don't you worry. I'll protect you," Jim insisted.

"How?" said Charity.

"I'll fight the case to the limit."

"Are you so eager to keep your wife?" said Charity.

"No. I never did love her. I'll never forgive her for this."

But he had not the courage to go and meet Kedzie and her mother and her father. They were an unconscionable time coming.

He did not know that Kedzie and Skip Magruder were renewing old acquaintance.

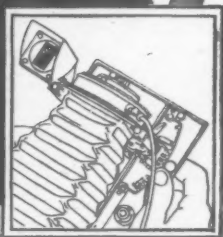
While he waited, the full horror of his dilemma came over him. Kedzie would undoubtedly sue him for divorce. If he lost, Charity would be publicly disgraced. If he won, he would be tied to Kedzie for life.

IN the next installment of his novel—which, by the way, is the concluding installment of this story—Mr. Hughes deals with the most dramatic phase of modern-day life we have ever seen in fiction. It will appear in the August issue, on sale July 23rd. ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

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